

# THRILLING AND WONDER STORIES

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**MR. ZYTZT  
GOES  
TO MARS**  
*A Novel of the Future*  
By **NOEL LOOMIS**

Also  
**THE  
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# THRILLING WONDER STORIES

Vol. XXXII, No. 3

A THRILLING PUBLICATION

August, 1948

*A Novel of the Future*



## MR. ZYTZT GOES TO MARS

By NOEL LOOMIS

*Strange vegetable creatures from the red planet were puzzling earth's rulers until Healey and Browne took the salvaged derelict Phoebus on a mad space journey!* 9

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**U**PWARD, ever upward, moves Man in his flight to the Stars!" Thus spake Dr. Amadeus Rafferty in the April issue of this magazine in an article which, while lampoonish in intent, none the less expressed the curious and unbreakable faith of the human being in his own destiny.

When space flight is achieved by homo sapiens it will be accomplished largely by faith—faith of man that he can and will survive under utterly unknown conditions, faith in the astrogational concept of the universe created by himself, faith in the mechanical achievements of his fellows.

Without faith he would doubtless still be inhabiting caves in hillsides and hunting food on the hoof with clubs. Neither sling nor spear nor bow would have been invented. Without faith, in short, he would not be Man.

Yet there is a dark side to his ability to

believe which makes the noblest of all his concepts the biggest millstone around his neck. For his belief is also credulity and at times it seems that the greater and deeper his faith, the more narrow, cruel and rock-bound his stupidity.

### Two Sides to the Coin

In itself all faith is good—yet without adaptation to reason it can bring more misery than famine itself. Mohammed, for example, achieved through the faith of his followers a human temperance that far surpassed the abortive attainments in that regard of Andrew Volstead and the Anti-Saloon League put together. Yet he preached that only by heroic death in battle could the highest plane of virtue and purification be won after death—thus promoting centuries of tragic religious warfare.

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There are two sides to the coin of belief and only one of them shines.

For thousands of years Man believed his world to be the center of the universe and governed his life thereby. Earth was literally his dish-platter, rather—and he lived his life within its snake or water-bounded limits in sound psychological adjustments. Somewhere above him was a heaven, a Valhalla, a Nirvana—somewhere below a Styx-bounded underworld of Hades.

It is only by understanding man's adjustment and age-old attunement to this concept that modern man can accept as rational the opposition to Galileo or a Copernicus, who came along to rock the very universe as previously entertained. Such new concepts attacked not only the bases of organized religion upon which faith then rested but the very ego of Man himself.

When Columbus came along to prove the correctness of the Galilean concept over the Ptolemaic one, which had for so long constituted the core of Western European ideology, the great period of adjustment in which we are still living was inaugurated.

The earth, it developed, was round and only a comparatively small entity in a system which had the sun as its center. Heaven and Hell lost their geographical locations and the entire structure of theology was in for reformation. Magellan and Drake finished the jobs beyond argument when they circled the globe.

### A Process of Adjustment

Although the world is still sorely dotted with primitive regions where inadmissible concepts are clung to tenaciously, this process of adjustment has come a long way. It is highly doubtful that any of the major beliefs are openly combatting the advance of science. A great proportion of our advanced scientists go to church of Sundays—and do so without fear of excommunication or of being blasted from the pulpit.

But the human ego still hangs on, far beyond the call of reason, to any tenet or credo that enhances its supremacy in the scheme of things or its apparent virtue. The vilification and deliberate misunderstanding of Darwin when he first broached the theory of evolution occurred within the last century. Unlettered and lettered alike found the admission of apes to even a remote branch of the family tree a repulsive process.

(Continued on page 124)

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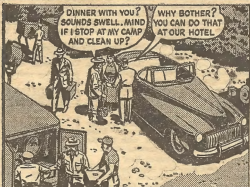
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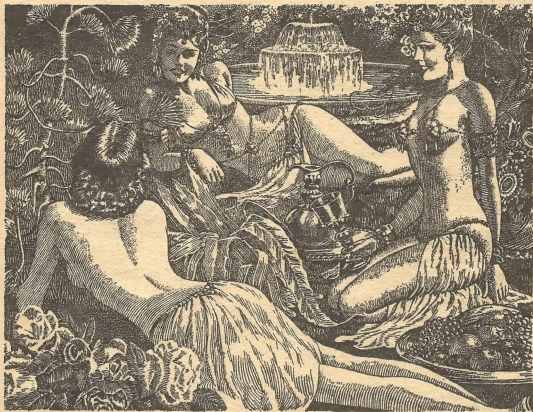
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# JEFF LOST INTEREST IN FISHING WHEN...







# MR. ZYTZTZ GOES TO MARS

*Strange vegetable creatures from the Red Planet were  
puzzling Earth's rulers until Healey and Browne took  
the salvaged derelict Phoebus on a mad space journey!*

**a novel by NOEL LOOMIS**

## CHAPTER I

### *Men Without Standing*

**C**OMMANDER PICKENS stared at Cadet Healey across his desk. His face was smiling, but his eyes were like blue ice. "We're a Legion of the Condemned," the commander said.

Cadet Healey answered, "Yes, sir."

Pickens leaned forward. "The Rocket Service is a dumping ground for men who get taken off active duty. There are no criminals or no-goods—that kind never have gotten into the Air Marines—but these are men who for one reason or another have



hit bad luck. It isn't their fault—but the tradition of the International Air Marines is that no officer ever loses a ship except by enemy action."

"Yes, sir."

"He's bumped back to his cadet rating, which is no rating at all. He's not an officer and he's not an enlisted man. He can never win a commission again as long as he lives. Calling him a cadet is just a way of labeling him a failure. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes, sir. They're miscarriages like me."

Pickens' blue eyes had lights in their depths now. He was a man of a little under average height, middle age, solidly built, smooth-faced, and half bald.

"We come out here to work it out. Secretly every one of us hopes that he will break the iron-bound tradition. We don't generally admit it and we know that nobody ever has broken it. We have our lives to lose in the Rocket Service, and nothing to gain, not even our former ranks. So long as we live, we'll officially be branded cadets and we'll get cadet pay. The rules say that no man needs more than one chance. You see, don't you, Cadet Healey, that there is no use even hoping?"

"Yes, sir."

"That there's no use risking our lives trying to fly to the Moon and back?" Pickens insisted.

"Yes, sir."

Commander Pickens leaned forward. Now his eyes were intense. "Then you understand this from the start. Cadet Healey: we're going to Mars!"

Healey opened his eyes and looked straight at Pickens for the first time. "You almost make me feel that we *are* going to Mars," he said slowly.

"There are two hundred of us out here who have that one idea."

**H**EALEY was awed a little at the intensity of the commander. Things weren't turning out as Healey had expected when the gyro pickup had met him in Wamsutter and flown him across the desert, northwest of Rawlins. He had thought vaguely that the Rocket base would be a bunch of zombies, but now as he looked at Commander Pickens he was impressed with the feeling that they were very much alive, and more than that, that perhaps he himself was alive once more. Pickens had been telling him there wasn't a chance to break

through the two-hundred-year-old regulations of the Air Marines, but now, in spite of that, Healey began to wonder how the Marines could ignore the men who should make the first flight to Mars.

"We make our own ranks out here," Pickens said. "They're unofficial, of course, but since you were in the top ten of the class of twenty-one-seventeen, I am promoting you to junior lieutenant."

"Thank you, sir."

"Now, then—" Pickens picked up a heavy file folder. "You are a Healey. For five straight generations the Healeys have furnished admirals in the International Air Marines, and you expected to be the sixth." He did not wait for an answer. "But you picked an unfortunate subject for your thesis, and so you were graduated as a cadet only."

"Yes, sir."

Pickens looked at him keenly. "I suppose your father couldn't even attend the exercises. Regulations would prohibit an admiral shaking hands with a graduated cadet."

"That is right, sir."

Pickens looked at him steadily, then his voice was soft:

"We are going to Mars. Lieutenant, and we'll see if the Air Marines can ignore that. The brass hats think they've buried us out here. Twenty-two ships have left this base in the hundred and fifty years since it was established in nineteen-sixty. None has ever come back and landed safely. They've crashed, blown up, or disappeared in the void. No man on any one of the twenty-two has lived to return to Earth. But we are going to Mars!" There was defiance in his voice and deadly determination in his blue eyes.

Healey straightened. His eyes opened a little. "Yes, sir. 'I'm in favor of that, sir.'"

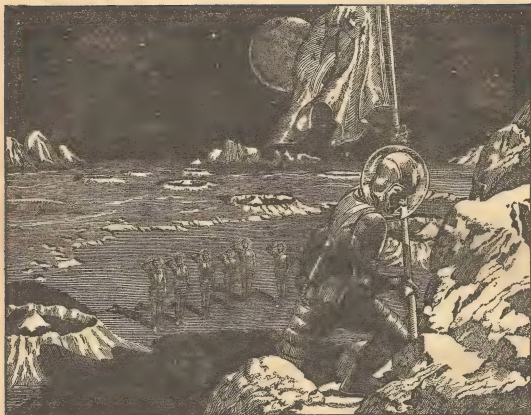
"Now, then," said Pickens. "I'm interested in this paper that got you in bad at school."

Healey began to look alert. "Yes, sir. It was about Atlantis and Lemuria."

"I know. Anything but original. You reviewed some evidence that has been common property for thousands of years, tending to show that some heavy runaway body passed close to the Earth around the year nine thousand B.C. and caused upheavals which left both Atlantis and Lemuria at the bottoms of their respective oceans."

"Yes, sir." For the first time, a lightness of tone came into Healey's voice. "But when





He wedged the flagpole into a crack while the honor guard stood at attention (CHAP. II)

the paper reached Senator Romulus P. Philipuster, chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, there was even a greater upheaval."

Pickens chuckled. "I can well imagine." He looked off into space. "Old Senator Stevens was quite a patron of research. He sponsored the Government's submarine expedition to Atlantis, and I guess he put a good deal of his personal fortune into it. But along came a Philipuster, young and ambitious. Stevens was known as a hard nut to crack, but Philipuster picked the most likely weak spot and conducted an economy campaign. He ridiculed Stevens for spending money on a world of fantasy, and one night in a speech made the remark that there was not an Atlantis and never had been one and anybody who doubted that could go look for themselves.

"He was probably just trying to be funny, but it caught on. Philipuster became known as the man who proved Atlantis was a myth,

and he was elected. He probably wished sometimes he hadn't made that crack, but he couldn't back down because the party wouldn't let him. Then you came along and threw it in his face. The party leaders were indignant and demanded that Philipuster do something, so you were chosen for the sacrifice. Is that about it?"

"It seems that way, sir," Healey said morosely.

**P**ICKENS' face was grim when he uttered the next words.

"A man should always be careful what he says, even in the heat of argument, because there always is a chance that somebody will believe him." He looked keenly at Healey. "The worst of it is, any of us may do the same thing as Philipuster when he least expects it."

"Not I, sir," said Healey earnestly. "I've learned my lesson. I'll never make an idle remark that might hurt somebody else."



"Well, let's hope so. By the way, your paper offered considerable proof that the Lemurians, so-called possessed the secret of counteracting gravity."

"Yes, sir."

Pickens eyed him. "If we had that secret here, Lieutenant, what a time-saver it would be!"

Healey's eyes began to glow. "You're right, sir. I hadn't really connected it up. Rocket travel would be a cinch, wouldn't it? We'd go to Mars fast."

Pickens nodded. "I wonder just why Philipuster had you sent here," he said. "Is he deliberately putting you in a place where you can fight back?"

Healey looked at Pickens. The older man was not bitter or cynical, as he might have been. He was fighting back, yes. He was a rebel with bared teeth. But he wasn't fighting Philipuster or even the big brass in the Air Marines. His fight was with the hide-bound customs of the Marines.

Healey, too, began to see beyond any doubt that the only hope of beating down that two-hundred-year-old tradition was to do something extraordinary, something constructive and something which the whole world would talk about and would respect.

"Yes, sir," he said, and his voice for the first time was vibrant with hope. "Perhaps he is. When do we start for Mars, sir?"

But there followed three years of hard work before they could get started. Commander Pickens knew his business. He was thorough and he was a driver and a leader. Young Lieutenant Healey found that out very soon. And he also discovered that every man on the base was fighting for the right to go up with Pickens and the ship.

The World Council allotted them plenty of money in the interest of research. Pickens hired cowboys from the ranches, miners from the mountains, and farmers from the dry-land of Wyoming to do the manual labor, while they, the two hundred former officers, and Healey, who never had been an officer, worked day and night and in between times.

They got the ship ready. It was a big one, close to eight hundred feet long, and they had built it in an enormous launching-rack out in the middle of the desert where it wouldn't hurt anybody if it exploded. Atomic power had not been adapted for air travel. Propulsion was from the conventional rocket-type engines, but with improved aozzles and new nitrogen-base fuel that had

more wallop than nitroglycerine ever produced.

Threaded through all their work, Healey saw, was the secret hope of each man that, if they were successful, they would break down the steel-bound tradition of the Air Marines. Perhaps others beside Healey had fathers in the service. Healey didn't know. None of them ever talked about it. They only worked.

As for the ship, they knew they could get off the ground, and they knew they could pass critical speed; it was getting back to Earth alive that was the problem.

## CHAPTER II

### *Venture Into Space*

IT WAS not until 2120 that they loaded materiel for the take-off. The two hundred former officers of the finest military organization on Earth climbed up the ladder. Healey was with Pickens in the control room.

He heard the commander give the order to seal the hatches, and then he realized that the depressed feeling he had was due to the fact that there had been no word from his father—not even good wishes. He hadn't heard from the Admiral since graduation day, and it hurt. Of course the old gentleman was saving trouble for both of them by forgetting their relationship, but it hurt. And the lieutenant knew that it probably hurt the Admiral a lot more than it did him. . . .

They got into the air, but that wasn't anything unusual.

"Remember," Pickens said grimly to Healey, "we're the seventeenth to get safely off the ground. All this fire and thunder is just as dangerous as it looks."

"Yes, sir," said Healey, but in his heart was a song, a virile song of spaceways and man and the stars, such a song as he knew men would sing for a billion years.

They had christened her *Phoebus*, the Sun-god, and she lived up to her name. Within eight hours they were spotting a landing place on the Moon. In another hour they were sitting down. The *Phoebus* handled like a dream. She snuggled down on the bare volcanic rock, and Commander Pickens calmly wrote a message for the radio officer to transmit to Earth:

PHOEBUS REACHED PORT ACCORDING TO ORDERS. ALL HANDS SAFE. And he added two words that were grimly remindful of the fate of former ships: SHIP INTACT.

Yes, Pickens looked calm enough, thought Healey, except for his eyes. The rest of his face was bland, unemotional, but the eyes had a fierce, eager fire in their blue depths.

"Lieutenant," he said, and he could not keep the jubilation out of his voice, "we are here!"

Then he said proudly: "Lieutenant, you will take a party of six men and plant the World Council flag."

With nervous fingers Healey fastened up his bulky pressure-suit, led his men into the air-block, marched up an outcropping of granite with the feel of the Moon-substance under his feet, put the flagpole into a crack and wedged it there with loose rocks, while the honor guard stood at attention. He stepped back and saluted the flag, then they went to the *Phoebus*.

The entire ship's company stood at attention when Healey marched in from the air-lock, and he could read on every face the thrill of knowing that they were on non-terrestrial soil. In a lot of faces, too, mostly those of the younger men, he saw the hope that had been with them all from the start—that this was it, that the Air Marines couldn't ignore them any longer.

Two hours later Healey took out the rocket-gyro runabout and investigated the three wrecks of previous flights. The bodies had mummified from the lack of air and moisture. They gathered the ship's logs from two of the wrecks. The other ship had exploded and burned—or, rather, it had fused. It was one solid mass of metal, like ice cream melted down in the sun.

They took out all the bodies they could recover, for burial back on Earth. They left a cache of supplies for future travelers; they gathered information; they painted an enormous aluminum cross on the rock that the 100-inch-'scopes back on Earth could see, so that even the most skeptical of their critics back home would be unable to deny that Pickens' ship had landed.

At the very last, Healey painted a small face making a long nose.

"That," he said judiciously, "ought to give the scientists at the four-hundred-inch bowl on Aconcagua something to think about."

All the while, Commander Pickens sat in-

side the *Phoebus* with a grim look on his face and a faraway light in his blue eyes. They made ready to take off, and Healey said:

"Sir, aren't you going to put foot on the Moon?"

PICKENS turned to him with a look almost of fanaticism. "The Moon is small stuff. I don't step out of this ship on another planet until we get to Mars."

They took off. It was a little rough getting into the air. The *Phoebus*' stern dragged a little on the upthrust and opened a few seams against the ridge where the flag was planted but the flag wasn't disturbed, and they welded up the cracks on the way back, behind closed bulkheads.

Eight hours after take-off they were settling down again over the Wyoming desert. Again they landed safely, and this time the whole world was there to meet them—the whole world, that is, except the International Air Marines. If there was an officer of the Marines present he must have been masquerading as a sagebrush, but there were three hundred thousand insane civilians out on the desert, and almost that many reporters—and to reporters who hadn't had a real news story since the atomic bomb back in 1945, this was a video scanner's dream. . . .

Well, they had gone to the Moon and they had come back. They were summoned by the President. They got medals. Congress voted them the pay of their "inactive" statuses and raised everybody's rank. They got everything—except what they most wanted. Apparently the big brass in the Air Marines didn't watch the video reports.

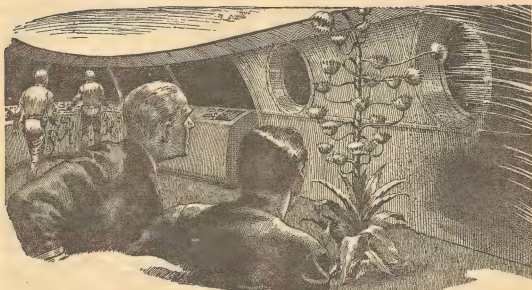
Lieutenant Healey and the rest of the two hundred were disappointed and discouraged—all but Commander—now Captain—Pickens.

"No," he said. "I didn't think a little trip to the Moon would change anything. But wait till we come back from Mars!"

Healey looked thoughtfully at the captain. For the first time, he realized that Pickens, too, had his heart set on reinstatement. But Pickens was more practical than the rest of them. He had been a captain in the Air Marines. He knew how tough they were to crack.

They went back to work. Captain Pickens paid no attention to anything but the *Phoebus*. The gleam would come in his blue eyes and his jaws would clench and he





"The rulers of Atlantis took us in charge when we visited their island," Mr. Zytztz said (Chap. IX)

would say, "We're going to Mars!" And everybody knew they were.

They made several trips to the Moon in the next two years, acquiring information and experience and dexterity in handling the *Phoebus*. They received an assignment of five hundred sailor technicians through the Bureau of Meteorology to help build a bigger ship, and the keel was laid.

But Captain Pickens couldn't wait for the bigger ship. In 2122 they took off for Mars. Pickens had called to Healey the night before.

"You're a Marine in every sense of the word, Healey. I'm making you lieutenant commander. You will continue to be my adjutant."

"Thank you, sir."

"I've put it on the video so your father will see it," Pickens said, suddenly soft-voiced. "I know he'd like to know."

Healey was startled. "Did you know him, sir?"

Pickens' jaws clenched. "I skippered a cruiser under your dad. He's a million per cent. He fought for me all the way through. And he used to dream of the time when you would have a ship of your own, Commander."

"Yes, sir," Healey whispered. It was hard to talk past the lump in his throat.

It was a smooth trip, almost monotonous.

Nine days later they brought the *Phoebus* down on the red alkali of Mars. It was afternoon and the sun was overhead, clear and distinct, but its light was pretty feeble.

Healey was trembling with excitement, but trembling inwardly. He kept his face calm as he looked around him and he knew that every man of the two hundred, even though they were hardened spacemen by now, felt just as he did. The officers on the bridge looked at Pickens. The captain took a deep breath and said to Healey:

"Commander, the lock will not be opened until morning. The chemists and biologists, and so on, must have time for their tests. This isn't the Moon, you know." He looked piercingly at Healey.

Healey nodded. "No, sir, it isn't."

**T**HAT last line of Pickens' expressed the feelings of all, Healey knew, although nobody commented. The Moon seemed like small time stuff now. The Moon was really a part of Earth, but Mars—Mars was a real planet in its own right, not a satellite of Earth. Now they were really interplanetary travelers, and it was a little frightening.

There were issues of rum that night, a hangover from the old British Navy, and each officer on the captain's staff killed a pint of the best Scotch, and nobody slept.



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Everybody pretended to have too much to do. By daylight every man who could get near a quartz porthole was trying to see outside, and the Old Man—they had assumed the prerogative of referring to Pickens be-

hind his back with that respectful term of disrespect—the Old Man was staring at the ground glass screen of his video.

"Commander," he said to Healey, "what do you make of this?"





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"Commander," he said to Healey, "what do you make of this?"

Healey stared, and frowned. Yesterday there had been nothing but red alkali. This morning the big ship was surrounded by hundreds of what looked like giant century-plants.

They were as tall as a man, and their "leaves" were waving ceaselessly.

"I don't know, sir," Healey said in a moment, "but it doesn't look any too dangerous."

After some discussion in a staff meeting, Pickens ordered the air-lock opened and Healey was sent out with a landing party in pressure-suits to set up the first World Council flag on a strange planet.

When they got outside they were completely ringed in by century-plants. Healey was too scared to be thrilled. He didn't see how the century-plants could harm them, unless they were poisonous, but this was a strange land, a different world, and it didn't resemble the Moon at all.

But Healey didn't want to let the men see he was scared. He said, business-like, "We'll find an opening here and go through these plants and set the flag up far enough away so it won't be scorched by the rocket-blast."

They approached the wall of plants warily. Some of them were taller than Healey. He looked for a break in their ranks. "It would simplify things if they would move," he thought, and at that moment a path formed unexpectedly before him.

The plants moved back on each side and left a path for them.

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### CHAPTER III

#### *Moving Plants*

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**G**INGERLY the party went out a couple of hundred yards, with Healey walking confidently so the men wouldn't guess how he felt. After all, he was only twenty-six and he wore a commander's stripes, even if they were unofficial. A seaman with a sledge drove an iron stake into the hard dirt. They raised the flag and presented arms, then they marched immediately back to the *Phoebus*.

As before, the plants opened a path for them. Healey drew a deep breath of relief, but he felt uneasy, and stayed on the ground

until the other men were inside. He was ten feet from the Jacob's-ladder and just ready to follow the men inside when he heard a soft shuffling and looked around to see the plants crowding in on him.

It was eerie. The long leaves waved and danced, and a noise came from all of them that sounded like the wind sighing through the pine trees.

Commander Healey was terrified. He took a step backward, and one giant of a plant, nine feet tall, slithered over the alkali and came to a stop in front of him, between him and the ladder. Its leaves were gesticulating and that odd rustling noise came from it in a broken stream, with breaks and pauses and variations that made it seem almost like a person talking.

Healey had a sudden nightmare vision of being captured by creatures that were not even of the Earth. He ducked under a waving leaf and ran for the ladder. He shot up it and snatched it up after him and slammed the hatch.

**F**IVE minutes later, still trembling, he reported to the staff.

He was quite aware that for a moment he had lost his head.

He had run, and he wondered what the Old Man thought. Now that he faced the captain, he thought it would have been better to be a captive of Mars than to have the Old Man think he was a coward.

But pickens merely looked at him casually. "Quite a sensation, isn't it, Commander, being on a strange planet?" he observed.

Healey breathed easier and began to get control of himself. Now that the Old Man had forgiven him, he was able to compose himself.

The Old Man was the first to cross-examine him, then the ship's biologist took over.

The biologist asked questions about the plants.

"I am trying to decide whether they should be classified as 'human,'" he explained to the Old Man. "They're unquestionably mobile, and probably sentient."

Somehow the word "human" struck Healey wrong. He was a commander in the Rocket Service, and could he let it be said that he had run from anything human? He spoke up fast.

"They couldn't be human," he said. "They haven't got eyes."



The Old Man stared at Healey. Probably the biologist had his own definition of "human," but he didn't get a chance to say anything. This was a brand new experience for Earth-people, and since there was no precedent the Old Man made his own precedent right on the spot.

"I think the commander is right," he said slowly. "I don't think a creature would be human unless it had eyes."

And there it stuck. They didn't have eyes, so they weren't human.

During the next two weeks the *Phoebus* sent out exploring parties. The geologist located some promising deposits of plutonium, but there was no sign of life anywhere except the century-plants, who were at once labeled Martians.

Captain Pickens himself finally left the *Phoebus* to feel the earth of another planet. He tried to pick up a handful, but it was caked and hard.

The entire crew was under strict orders from the World Council to cause no harm to any living creature, and especially not to bring back any specimens of living creatures or plants. Any man who would have tried to touch one of the Martians would have been court-martialed. A young ensign, Marvin Browne, complained to Healey that there they were in port and the Old Man wouldn't even let him get a telephone number.

"Never mind," said Healey. "It's a big universe."

**T**HE Martians always crowded up and tried to get into the ship when the lock was opened. The tallest one, the one that had frightened Healey the first morning, was especially persistent, and that annoyed Healey.

The tall century-plant shuffled about the ship all day long—the Earth-men couldn't find out where it went at night, but they disappeared—making that odd rustling noise, until finally Ensign Browne called him "Mr. Zytztz," and from then on his name was Zytztz.

To keep from frying the Martians in the rocket-blast, the *Phoebus* left one night at midnight while the Martians were out in the desert.

"Mr. Zytztz will be lonesome when he comes back in the morning and finds us gone," the Old Man said thoughtfully over a sky-chart.

The comment struck Healey as wrong. He wondered if he were getting touchy. "He can't be lonesome, sir. He hasn't got eyes."

"What has that got to do with it?"

That annoyed Healey still more. The Old Man had upheld his definition the first day. "If he hasn't got eyes, he can't be human, and if he isn't human, he can't be lonesome," Healey said defiantly.

The Old Man looked at him and said, "Hm."

It took them eleven days to make the trip back, but they were busy every minute. They had made exhaustive notes and had taken thousands of pictures with X-ray, infra-red, gamma-blue, beta-yellow, and with every known filter and device, and several hundred reels of microfilm. They had air samples, tons of geological specimens, core-drillings, temperature records, humidity readings, radiation records, and cosmic-ray counts.

The biologist had accumulated an astonishing mass of data for a man who had not been allowed to touch the subject, and he and the botanist section were busy together.

The W. C. radioed that they had prepared a base for the *Phoebus* at Havana, because Table Rock was too far out in the wilderness. They estimated that millions of people would be wherever the *Phoebus* might land, and to avoid a major disaster, they had to keep the crowds in a populated center where they could be handled.

When the *Phoebus* reached Earth, the reception was tremendous. The ship landed at the new spaceport that had been made over from an old trans-Atlantic airfield near the world capital, and the video said that fifteen million persons were in the streets when the men of the *Phoebus* marched to the assembly hall. But of the fifteen million, not one was an officer of the International Air Marines. It was something of a blow to Healey to realize that the Air Marines were still ignoring them. Captain Pickens noticed it, too, and the old gleam came in his eye that meant, "We aren't licked yet. We'll go to Andromeda and back if we have to."

He formally presented his report, which included all the written material and physical evidence from Mars—twelve thousand pounds of reports and photographs alone. Thirty-two scientists and their staffs had done a lot of speculating. Then the Council president informed them that every man on the *Phoebus* had been raised two grades—

unofficially, of course, he hastened to add— but they had also in view of facing unknown dangers, etc., etc., been granted a lifetime allowance of full pay at the rate of their new respective ranks, without regard to any subsequent circumstances.

"They've been mighty swell," Admiral Pickens said when he and Captain Healey went to their suite in the International Hotel.

"Yes, sir," Healey was glum.

Pickens glanced at him. "But the truth is, Captain, there isn't a man of the entire crew that wouldn't give it all back for a Welcome Home from the one place on Earth where they didn't get it."

"It's hard for me to understand," Healey said, and a little bitterness crept into his voice before he could stop it. "Why can't they loosen up?"

PICKENS nodded. There was as hard glitter in his eyes.

"It's getting a little hard even for me to swallow," the Old Man said. "I guess there's nobody funnier than people—unless it's Zytstzes."

Healey felt a retort on the tip of his tongue, but he suppressed it.

"Sometimes," he said, "for two cents I'd throw it all over and organize my own air service."

"You'd better raise your price," the Old Man said wisely, "because in spite of its stuffiness and its rigid discipline and its unbending traditions—I suppose one might in honesty say possibly because of those things—the International Air Marines is still the most glorious and the most exclusive military organization ever on Earth. You should know. You would have been the sixth Admiral Healey." The Old Man studied him for a moment. "You're still hoping," he said. "So do we all, but it's getting slimmer every time we cross an orbit. I'm beginning to understand now what I should have seen long ago. The Air Marines won't risk giving approval for a flash in the pan. Maybe if we stick at it all our lives—" He didn't finish.

The next night Captain Healey was having a relaxing drink in the Patio, minus his braid, because the pariahs of the Marines did not wear their stripes in public. A very large man came by and dropped into the seat across the table.

"Well," he said between hics, "Wunner

what the Air Marines think now that the poor cadets have swiped their glory. Pariahs of the Spaceways. Heh, heh! That's a good one. Pariahs of the Spaceways make Air Marines look shick!"

Captain Healey rose to his feet and stood solidly in his blue-green uniform, minus stripes, minus decorations, minus everything but the solid gold buttons of the Air Marines.

"Sir, you are drunk," he said. "You don't know what you're saying."

The big man got to his feet and he was a head taller than Healey and twice as broad. Astonishingly enough, he didn't wobble when he stood.

"Look, Mister." He put a massive forefinger on Healey's chest, and if Healey hadn't been braced he would have been pushed over. "You been handed a dirty deal by the Air Marines, an' I for one am glad you showed 'em up. The dirty—"

He did not finish. Healey stepped back, calculated the range and the resistance, and let the big man have one on the button. It was a very solid punch—so solid, in fact, that the big man relaxed at full length on the floor.

"He insulted the Marines," Healey said ruefully when Pickens bailed him out that evening. "Can't they understand we're not sore at the Marines. We're trying to get back in the Marines."

Pickens sighed.

"People probably lack understanding more than anybody," he said.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Mr. Zytstz Comes Aboard*

A WEEK later the World Council organized an Interplanetary Bureau, and one of its sub-divisions was the Classification Section. The Old Man was asked for a recommendation for membership in that section, and he recommended Healey.

"It's mostly an honor, more than anything else."

But at the first meeting Healey was elected chairman and then he suddenly discovered that the Classification Section had the task of determining whether nonterrestrial beings were anthropomorphic or, in other words, human.



They had Healey on the spot. He couldn't back down, so he suggested that no being should be called "human" unless it had eyes, and that rule passed unanimously.

Next day he read that the Ethics Section, to forestall trouble, had passed a rule that no non-terrestrial creature of any sort might be made the subject of a post-mortem examination for the next fifty years.

Apparently the entire population of the Earth was extremely conscious of the danger of offending unknown creatures, and pressure was brought everywhere to provide a set-up of laws that would absolutely preclude injury or offense to the Martians or any other inhabitant of a non-terrestrial planet. Senator Philipuster announced that he had received four tons of telegrams on the subject, which, after being duly counted, were carefully burned.

"I shall support protection for all non-Earth creatures," he announced, "at least until we learn more of their background."

"In other words," Healey commented, "until he knows just how far he can safely go."

The World Council then commissioned the *Phoebus* to bring back three Martians on the next trip, provided they were entirely willing to come.

The century-plants were waiting for them the morning after the *Phoebus* landed. The biologist and his staff spent two weeks investigating their lives, but he did not find out much.

Squads were detailed to watch them. They followed the Martians at night when the century-plants went off into the desert, but the plants didn't go anywhere in particular. They went out into the desert and curled up like honest-to-goodness century-plants into little balls as protection against the cold, apparently, but apparently they did not sleep. The squads could not get any closer to them than they could during the day, without the plants' leaves starting to wave and that peculiar rustling noise arising from somewhere in them.

At the end of the two weeks he concluded they were harmless, and that was about all. No Earth-man ever saw a Martian eat or sleep or open its eyes.

Finally the biologist and the botanist got together and decided to surround them with everything the *Phoebus* had to offer in the way of artificial food, which was considerable—they even had artificial puffed wheat

for breakfast.

Then the Old Man said to Healey, "Get us three of them."

Healey went outside in his pressure-suit. It was just before sundown, and Mr. Zytztz and his fellows were all there in their eternal ranks about the ship, as if they were waiting for something. Healey thought, almost as if they had been waiting for a long time, and as if they knew they would get what they were waiting for by the power of sheer patience—patience that might stretch into thousands of years.

Captain Healey stood there in front of Mr. Zytztz for a moment, and Mr. Zytztz began to move and to whisper, almost as if he knew they wanted him and he was eager to go. Healey started up the Jacob's-ladder.

Mr. Zytztz, as always, plodded toward the ladder.

But this time Healey waited when he reached the outer part of the air-lock. Mr. Zytztz's nine feet of waving leaves reached the ladder. Mr. Zytztz did not hesitate. He started up, and Healey could have sworn there was eagerness in the way the leaves wrapped their ends around the rungs of the ladder.

**B**Y THAT time the whole desertful of Zytztzes was weaving toward the ladder.

Healey was a little scared, but this time he knew what he was going to do. He let two more of them get on the ladder and then he signaled for a quick pullaway.

He had been a little worried that the Zytztzes would get frightened and perhaps drop off, but if they weren't at ease he couldn't tell it. The only reaction he got was that the Zytztzes left on the ground acted as if they were disappointed. Their leaves drooped a little when the ladder got beyond their reach, and they stopped, hundreds of them, in one motion.

How they knew the ladder was up was a mystery.

When the three were in, Healey ordered the air-lock sealed and escorted the Martians to their special room. Mr. Zytztz's leaves were moving everywhere, softly touching strange articles and strange materials—or Healey supposed they were strange to him, because after all Mr. Zytztz had lived on Mars all his life and they didn't have anything like steel or brass or polished mahogany on Mars. They had nothing there

but alkali and rocks and plutonium and Zytztzes.

Healey left them, to be on the bridge at the take-off. The *Phoebus* was in the air as soon as the other Zytztzes went back to the desert, and then the Old Man turned to Healey.

"Captain, bring in Mr. Zytztz."

"Yes, sir," Healey drew a deep breath and went to the special room. He opened the door gingerly. They had a big box of Mars' desert in one half of the room, but the three Zytztzes were huddled together in the port-hole, watching the stars, and they were *intent* about it, Healey thought, as no plant would ever be.

Healey didn't exactly know how to get Mr. Zytztz to the admiral without taking the other two, but as he opened the door he expected to say something calculated to be funny, like "All right, you egg-plants, get rolling." But Mr. Zytztz turned toward him—that is, Mr. Zytztz revolved in a half circle, and Healey had the queerest feeling that Mr. Zytztz was watching him.

Healey looked hard, but evidently there were no eyes.

"Sir," said Healey, "the admiral wishes to see you—only you," he said.

**O**F COURSE Healey did not expect them to understand.

He just didn't know what else to do, and maybe if he went through the words, his motions or something would give the general idea.

Well, they understood—so well that it scared Healey half to death. Mr. Zytztz started to shuffle toward him. The other two did not move. Healey wiped the sweat from his forehead and turned and led the way down the corridor to the bridge. Mr. Zytztz followed, bending and weaving considerably to keep his leaves from scraping against the ceiling.

He stood patiently in the center of the room and faced the admiral. That gave Healey a start. How did Mr. Zytztz know which was the ranking officer? Nobody had said a word. How did he know there was anybody in the room? How did he even know this was the room? Maybe it was an accident.

Presently everybody was walking around him, looking him over and talking about him in a way that would have been very impolite if he had been human, but Mr. Zytztz stood

very calm and patient on his stalk and did not even resist when the botanist felt of his "leaves."

Once in a while, after somebody made a remark, that strange rustling would come from Mr. Zytztz, almost as if he was trying to answer.

Well, they got back to Earth in fourteen days. They delivered the three Zytztzes to the World Council, which during their absence had been re-named the Inter-World Council, and already the video-casters called it the I. W. C.

**T**HERE was a great banquet, at which the three Zytztzes were treated as formally as if they were diplomats from a powerful nation. They were at the banquet table, but they stood; they didn't sit. They listened to the speeches, or at least they were quiet during the talking, even when old Senator Philpuster rolled sonorous phrases like "the dawn of a new era in interplanetary good will" off his tongue for two hours and a half in his official capacity of U. S. delegate at Large to the I. W. C. But after the senator sat down and everybody was thinking, "Thank goodness," Mr. Zytztz's top leaves dipped toward the floor and he made those rustling noises.

The Zytztzes were exhibited in New York, London, Moscow, Sydney, San Francisco. But after three months they didn't look very good.

They seemed to be wilting a little. Their leaves didn't look as fresh and green as they had, and they drooped more and more as they went along.

Captain Healey was in charge of them, and he saw that they were surrounded with every condition they had known on Mars, even to a vacuum chamber with air of exactly the same proportions as that on Mars and at the same pressure and humidity and with the same variations of temperature, but it didn't help.

The only thing he could figure was that they were lonesome, so he persuaded the I. W. C. that they should be taken back to Mars. . . .

On that trip, they were allowed the freedom of the ship, and it did not take long to discover that they were born space-travelers. Mr. Zytztz stayed on the bridge with Healey a good deal, and when Lieutenant Browne, the navigator, was off duty, Mr. Zytztz would study the stars for hours, and presently his



leaf-ends would delicately touch the controls as if he was suggesting a change in course.

"And confound it all," Healey told the Old Man, "he's always right when Browne checks on us."

Ether-travel in those days was very much dependent on navigation, for machinery had not yet been developed to allow for all the forces exerted by the various gravitational pulls, the solar drift, centerifugal inertia, strange magnetic currents, velocity, trajectory, planetary orbits, and the still unexplained ether drift. Or, rather, the machinery could be made, all right, but one ship couldn't carry it.

Whether Mr. Zytztz could see or not, he knew how to reach Mars, even though by that time the red planet was much farther away and it took over a month to get there. Mr. Zytztz would hover over the video screen for hours and then he would go to one of the portholes and stand for hours more, facing the constellation Vela at about fifty degrees minus declination. Sometimes he varied this by standing at the sky-chart and flipping its heavy linen pages with the tips of his leaves.

Captain Healey let him strictly alone, at first watching him, but presently not bothering to do that.

Mr. Zytztz learned what a pencil was for, and he would find a scratch-pad and make notes or calculations, consisting mostly of various arrangements of dots and straight lines. Apparently this was for his amusement only, for he would always crumple the sheets and toss them into the waste-basket.

And whether he could see or not, he had an excellent sense of perception, for he never missed the basket. Captain Healey envied his accuracy.

But Healey discovered one thing: the Zytztzes were not artisans.

One day Mr. Zytztz was using a mechanical pencil and it ran out of lead, and he worked at it for an hour without discovering what was wrong or even how to take it apart. He just stood there turning it over with the tips of his leaves and examining it aimlessly, touching it here and there or pulling on it gently, but obviously as helpless as a baby. He finally gave it to Healey to fix, and the captain decided Mr. Z. wouldn't be much good on an atomic toaster.

It was when Healey gave the pencil back to him with a new lead that he discovered Mr. Zytztz could talk.

A rustling came from somewhere within

his leaves and it said "Thank you" very clearly. Healey had become so used to him that he said, "You're welcome," before he realized what had happened, and then stared at the plant with his eyes wide open and blurted out

"You can talk!"

Mr. Zytztz's leaves nodded—rather complacently, Healey thought, and the rustling came again, and Healey distinguished more words.

They sounded like, "I'm glad you understand. Our enunciation isn't very good, but I will try to do better."

Healey's mouth was open. Yes, Mr. Zytztz could talk. His words were accompanied by that rustling that made the sounds fuzzy and not too distinct, but by listening carefully, as one would when hearing a foreigner speak an unfamiliar language, one could understand.

Healey was quite unable to see where the sound originated, but the thing that dumfounded him was that, without coaching or teaching, Mr. Zytztz had learned to speak the so-called English language with grammatical perfection in a few months—and not just stock phrases either; like "Give me a ham-on-rye" or "How about a shot in the arm, Buddy, to sweep the cobwebs out of my brain?" but abstract concepts.

"My enunciation isn't very good," Mr. Zytztz had said!

## CHAPTER V

### *For the Sake of Harmony*

**H**EALEY took a walk. He went down to the bar for a slug of *tequila*. The bartender mixed him a couple of atomic-busters and he took a fresh grip on himself and went back to the bridge.

He told the Old Man about it, but Pickens wasn't so young any more. He refused to be startled by anything. Lieutenant Browne (who had been Ensign Browne) was elated.

"Maybe," he said while Mr. Zytztz was standing before a porthole across the room, "maybe our vegetarian friend could dig up some numbers for me when we get to Mars."

Mr. Zytztz revolved half-way on his stock. The lieutenant's mouth opened a full six inches. Mr. Zytztz's leaves dipped gently

and lifted in what seemed very much like a smile.

"Yes, Lieutenant," he said in his fuzzy voice. "I know some very hot numbers back home." Then his leaves seemed to droop for an instant as if he was sad, and he turned back to the porthole and faced the constellation Vela.

Browne swallowed and Healey said drily, "Down the hall to your left, Lieutenant, and tell Joe to put them on my bill."

Browne stared at him and then said, "Yes, sir," saluted stiffly and went out almost on the double.

A soft rustling came from Mr. Zytztz. "Impetuous, isn't he?" he said without turning around.

"He's just learned," Healey said. "that his mother-in-law is an angel."

"Sorry," murmured Mr. Zytztz, and then he turned to Healey hesitantly. "Don't you think those religious concepts are a little outmoded?"

What could you do with a precocious four-year-old who would insist on exposing the fallacies of the stork story? That's what Healey did with Mr. Zytztz—nothing.

"Look," he said. "I'm sorry about that. I was just trying to be funny."

Mr. Zytztz's leaves were still for an instant, and then they moved sharply and they crackled for all the world like laughter.

"Oh, I think you're very funny," he said softly.

Healey took a deep breath and went over to write up the orders of the day. He looked up once to see Pickens watching him, and the admiral kept his face straight except for a crinkle at the corner of his mouth.

They landed on Mars that night.

Mr. Zytztz said he and his companions would like to be allowed to leave ship at once, so they opened the lock and let them go. Mr. Zytztz promised to be back in the morning.

But it wasn't until Healey saw him and his two companions shuffle across the red alkali in the glare of the landing-lights that he realized how very tired and shrunken they were. Mr. Zytztz wasn't over eight feet tall.

But the next morning they were back. Mr. Zytztz climbed the ladder and rapped on the air-lock door and Healey let him in. Healey was astonished when he saw him. Mr. Zytztz was fresh and green and—well, plump.

He sensed Healey's astonishment appar-

ently, because he said, "Ah, the desert air is wonderful my friend—especially at night."

He answered only vaguely when Healey tried to find out what had made the change, and Healey was forced to the conclusion that it was the quiet and solitude and so on, in other words, the psychological effect of the surroundings. That, of course, assumed that Mr. Zytztz had a mind like a human's.

Mr. Zytztz asked to see the Old Man. "Some of my fellows," he said, "would like to work on your ship."

The Old Man was stunned. "Work!"

"They will work well for you," Mr. Zytztz promised.

The Old Man sputtered. "Well, Nell's bells! I don't need any helpers. I—what do you think, Captain?"

Healey hesitated. Then he said, "What do you think, Lieutenant Browne?"

"Sir," said the lieutenant, speaking only to Healey, "I say a little fraternization will be conducive to better inter-terrestrial relations."

**H**EALEY turned back to the Old Man with a perfectly dead pan. "Sir," he said, "I say a little fraternization will be conducive to better inter-terrestrial relations."

The Old Man glared at them both and then at Mr. Zytztz. Mr. Zytztz's leaves were quivering gently.

"We'll take six of them," the Old Man sputtered, "but you'll be held responsible."

"Yes, sir," Mr. Zytztz said promptly. "And we shall receive the usual rates of pay, I suppose."

The Old Man's eyes narrowed, "Yes," he said thoughtfully, "at least on this first trip. After that it will be up to the IWC."

"Thank you, sir." One leaf raised and dipped in a salute, and Mr. Zytztz shuffled out fast.

The Old Man growled at Healey. "For a plant that isn't human, your Martian friend learns fast."

Healey winced. He had already done a lot of thinking about that.

The Zytztzes made perfect workmen; they were competent, strong, and tireless. But some things they couldn't do—they had to have help for even a simple repair job, but otherwise they had good brains. They followed orders even better than the robots back on Earth.

On the trip home Healey discovered how

they had learned the language. They, in effect, read the minds of men. When a man spoke, they got the mental picture from his mind. Healey remembered some of the choice remarks he had made in Mr. Zytztz's hearing before he had any idea about their understanding, and it was, to be conservative, disquieting. He remembered when he had first denied them the right to be classified as humans, and when they reached Havana again he called a meeting of the Classification Section and proposed that the Martians be re-classified. But the other members voted him down, quoting his own law, "They must have eyes."

Healey offered an amendment to repeal that law, but he found out that the bigger an organization is, the more ponderous it is. The section rejected his amendment coldly, and there was nothing else he could do but go down to the bar and initiate an extended research into the efficacy of atomic-busters. He would have given his unofficial rank in the Rocket Service to correct the injustice he had done the Zytztzes.

**I**N THE next few years a good many Zytztzes worked on spaceships, of which there got to be quite a number. The only catch with the Zytztzes was that they had to go back to Mars every six months or so to refresh themselves.

Otherwise they were perfect workmen. They never caused any trouble and they were never ill.

One summer the *Phoebus* was making a trajectory shot over the Sun when Healey spoke to the Old Man about the Zytztzes.

"There is no doubt in my mind that they are human," he said. "A human being has to have a soul, doesn't it?"

The Old Man looked at him sharply. "That is not the same definition you offered a few years back."

Healey blushed. "No, sir. I was wrong, and I'm sorry. They have souls, all right. Any kind of creature that loves the ether as the Martians do—he simply has to have a soul."

The Old Man nodded. "I think you're right. No matter what else a man may be, if he hasn't got that spark inside of him, space-travel will give him the wiggles."

The Zytztzes had that spark, Healey knew. From the way they had taken to it from the first, Healey could not escape the impression that they must have had indelible memories of days in the dim past, when perhaps their



Healey found a lead casket containing a manuscript written in fine script (CHAP. X)



forefathers had traveled in space.

"It's funny," Lieutenant Browne said one day. "You'd think they'd been so long on Mars they'd have taken root, but they don't even get space-sick the first time they fly."

"There are a lot of things about them that I don't understand," Healey said.

**I**N 2125 the IWC ordered a census of the Martians. There were exactly seven hundred and seventy-seven. There were, oddly enough, no young ones. All were adults.

In another five years every single Zytztz held a rating of seaman, first class. Only one had advanced beyond that, because space travel very quickly had developed the most rigid caste system of all history. It was an anomaly, being, as it was, developed within the ranks of men who themselves were discriminated against by the Air Marines. Or perhaps it was because of that. At any rate, space-sailors and space-officers were exclusive far past anything the Air Marines could offer. Perhaps it was because of the glamour lent by the proximity of sudden death, but no Earthman would take orders from a non-human.

The one who had gone beyond seaman was Mr. Zytztz, who had been made a chief bos'n's mate—and that promotion had precipitated a riot and near-mutiny on the crack passenger run to Luna. By intercession of Admiral Pickens, Mr. Zytztz was not demoted, but his authority was rigidly limited to Martians.

No one had any complaint whatever against Mr. Zytztz except that he was "a century-plant," and presently there was an IWC rule passed that no Earthman could be put under the supervision of anybody but an Earthman. That made it official.

But the Zytztzes took it and minded their own business and did their work. Mr. Zytztz asked Healey what to do with his pay, the captain suggested he open a savings account in the Interplanetary National Bank. The next time Healey dropped into the bank, the cashier astonished him with the information that every one of the seven hundred and seventy-seven Zytztzes had ordered their pay deposited in Mr. Zytztz's account.

In the year 2130 the regular census was taken, and it showed seven hundred and seventy-seven Martians. No young ones. All adults. No deaths. No births.

Healey could have asked Mr. Zytztz about

that, but somehow he<sup>o</sup> never quite had the nerve. That was odd, too, because Healey gave Mr. Zytztz duties that kept him on the bridge most of the time, and Healey asked him practically everything, and always got an answer. There were no evasions. But there were a few personal subjects on which the captain would think of talking to him, and he would turn to him to speak and something would stop him. Somehow or other Mr. Zytztz emanated quiet reserve that no sensitive man would try to penetrate under ordinary circumstances.

Then Pickens retired. He wasn't an old man, and he had had a complete Osterhus rejuvenation and was good for sixty years more, but he was defeated man. A dogged look was in his eyes when he told Healey:

"I thought we'd be recognized by the Air Marines when we went to Mars, but it's no go. I'm giving up. I guess there's nobody more hard-headed than people."

Healey and the rest of the pariahs had given up, too, by now, but no one but Admiral Pickens would admit it. They just didn't think much about it any more.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Wall of Prejudice*

**F**INALLY Healey was promoted to rear Admiral and put in charge of the expedition to Jupiter. They built a newer and bigger ship, and Senator Philipuster's niece, Clarissa, christened it the *Twinkling Star* with a bottle of champagne that made Commander Browne, Healey's adjutant now, lick his lips.

They made a couple of shake-down cruises to Luna and then provisioned for the trip to Jupiter. Healey asked Mr. Zytztz to act as his escort—or valet, as they had said back in the nineteen hundreds—and they set off one night in a blast of green rocket flames that must have lighted up the entire island of Cuba.

Everything went according to plan. Jupiter turned out to be a pretty solid planet with a terrific gravity that was going to strain the *Twinkling Star's* power plant to get away, but the menthane gas and so on was in clouds hundreds of miles above the surface, and they landed nicely and planted the IWC flag

in the name of God, the IWC, and Senator Philipuster.

They did some exploring and located ores and lots of them, including sources for both americium and curium, Nos. 95 and 96 in the periodic table, but there were no living creatures or growing things of any kind, and Healey was relieved that there would be no necessity of deciding whether anybody was human or unhuman.

After three weeks he called in the two scout-boats and took off with considerable groaning of the power units. After they passed critical velocity they eased up the pounding of the engines and relaxed. Commander Browne and Mr. Zytztz and Admiral Healey were in the control-room.

"Well, Mr. Zytztz," Healey said, glad that the strain was over, "what are you going to do now?"

Mr. Zytztz revolved on his stalk where he had been watching the constellation Vela. His leaves were rather still.

"I'm going to apply for re-classification," he said, "when we get back."

Healey frowned and tried to think of something to say.

"Yes," Mr. Zytztz went on in his fuzzy voice, "I know you have tried, but perhaps if they hear me—well, I don't think they will turn me down."

"Why do you want to be re-classified," Healey asked. "You hold a bos'n's grade already."

Healey could have bitten his tongue when Mr. Zytztz answered, "I want an officer's ticket."

Healey stared at him, and Commander Browne looked at Healey and nodded as if to say, "Why not?" and Healey thought, "Yes, why not?"

But Healey jumbled those thoughts hurriedly, for he had learned how to scramble his mental waves so Mr. Zytztz wouldn't understand them. He looked at Browne and Browne was doing the same thing. Whenever Commander Browne made those faces he was engaged in some pretty heavy cerebrating.

When they got back to Havana, Healey skipped the ceremonies. It was old stuff by then. He sent Commander Browne as a stand-in and thereby earned his undying wrath, for Senator Philipuster was just back from a month's vacation at Space Travel, Inc's., lunar vacation ground.

Healey went with Mr. Zytztz to the of-

fices of the Classification Section. Healey turned in his resignation, and Mr. Zytztz applied for reclassification.

As the originator of the "eyes" rule, Healey argued its lack of ground. He cited his long acquaintance with Mr. Zytztz. He made him perform all sorts of mental feats that involved perception that could not be construed as anything but seeing. He indulged in the only real oratory of his life.

But the bearded members of the section were anything but vacillating.

"We cannot see any eyes," the chairman said, "so it is fair to conclude that he has no eyes in the human sense of the word." They voted Healey down unanimously.

**T**HE chairman asked Healey into his office to look over some matters that had come up during Healey's absence on Jupiter, and when they were inside alone, with Mr. Zytztz waiting patiently in the reception room, the chairman turned to Healey.

"Look, Admiral, we respect your opinion and all that, but don't you see the—ah, fellow, if you wish—the fellow just isn't human. It wouldn't do, you know. After all, they're only plants. We must preserve the superiority of the human race."

Healey looked at him hard. "What superiority?" he said, and turned on his heel.

He and Mr. Zytztz went back to quarters, and Healey said, "I'm really sorry, Mr. Zytztz. It was my fault in the very first—"

"Forget it," Mr. Zytztz murmured softly, like a breeze through the palm trees.

"But there isn't any reason—"

"Perhaps there is. They have little to go on but past experience, and they—"

"Yes, they're thick from the collar-bone on up."

Mr. Zytztz turned to him and there was the hint of a chuckle in his words.

"Let us not be insubordinate, Admiral," he said gently. "There are few of us who don't sometime make a mistake that inadvertently causes trouble for others. The human organism is so complex, and so primitive, really. Things are done or said where the motivation is not what it seems. A tiny bit of anger or fear creeps in—perhaps fear of losing one's standing in the eyes of others—and the act is performed or the words are spoken without a great deal of logic."

Healey stared at him: "On second thought," he said soberly, "perhaps it is an injustice to try to classify you as human."

A year later Admiral Healey, on an extension of his unofficial leave from the Space Marines, was re-assigned to Space Travel, Inc., to command their new and still bigger ship, the crack passenger-and-perishable-goods liner *Clarissa*. Yes, that was in honor of Philipuster's niece, and was Captain Browne (they had all been promoted again) ever annoyed when he saw her desecrate the second bottle of champagne in less than two years!

"If she was forty years younger," he grumbled, "I'd take her out and let her find out how much better that stuff works on porcelain plates than it does on beryllium plates."

Healey now was a full admiral and a wealthy man at forty-two. He could retire in twenty years more on full pay, and he would then be only sixty-two and in the very prime of life. He could buy a country estate on Aconcagua and devote his time to checking Captain Browne's telephone numbers.

In 2140 the IWC census showed: Martians, seven hundred and seventy-seven.

Some persons were very curious about that, but the Martians didn't talk. The one man who could have found out, Admiral Healey, saw no reason for prying into the affairs of the Zytztz.

Anyway, Mr. Zytztz wasn't on the Jupiter run for in those days the trip was too long for him.

A couple of years later Healey met Mr. Zytztz shuffling out of the port captain's office at Havanaport. Healey wished Mr. Zytztz had possessed a face, because Mr. Zytztz would have been grinning all over. His leaves were waving and bending and almost dancing in the sunlight. One of the leaf-ends was curled around a small book.

"Admiral," he purred, "congratulate me! I have just received my coveted officer's license."

Healey looked, and sure enough Mr. Zytztz had a third mate's ticket. How he'd done it Healey didn't know, but probably he had pestered the board until they decided to put him through, and if Healey knew those face-seamed old examiners they must have given him everything in the book.

Mr. Zytztz had his ticket and Healey guessed the examiners figured they were through with him.

"Why did you want a ticket so much?" he asked. "You're making a lot of money, and you don't need any."

**B**UT Mr. Zytztz was exuberant. "Some day, when I get my master's ticket, I'll have a ship of my own. I couldn't command my own ship now without breaking the regulations, you know."

Healey was not surprised to see Mr. Zytztz down at the spaceport a few days later shuffling along the corridors, watching the ships come in, hoping each time that here was the one where he would get a third mate's berth so he could start working up.

But it was hopeless and Healey knew it. Mr. Zytztz had been labeled "not human," and nobody was going to hire him as third mate. They didn't dare, to. Their crews would have jumped ship.

Three months later Healey dropped him off at Mars on the way to Jupiter. Mr. Zytztz was pretty wilted and limp-looking, but he said:

"Thanks, Admiral. See you in Havana."

On the way back to Earth, a shuttle-boat met them out from Mars, and Mr. Zytztz came through the air-lock.

"I have just talked to Mr. Morgan, who represents Ether Fleet, Inc.," he said happily. "He has practically promised me a berth if I can get a master's certificate."

Healey gasped. "A master's certificate!"

"Yes," Mr. Zytztz purred proudly. "He said all their mates hold master's certificates. So I am going back to Havana."

"He didn't actually promise you, though, did he?"

"No, sir, but that was the implication."

Healey thought that over for a while. Morgan had given Mr. Zytztz the brush-off with that phony story about all his mates holding master's certificates. But why hadn't Mr. Zytztz read his mind and known that?

One day Healey asked him, "Don't you still read minds, Mr. Zytztz?"

"Oh, no," Zytztz said pleasantly. "I quit that years ago, because it embarrassed so many persons when they later discovered I could do it." . . .

Healey sat in on the examination. That board of gray-haired men were grouped around Mr. Zytztz like hawks around a day-old chick. Healey took one look and he knew Mr. Zytztz would not pass this time.

They asked Mr. Zytztz about his ether-time, and he produced a sheaf of discharge slips that would have made most captains envious. Then they began to throw questions at him—questions that came like red-hot rocket jets. They set him adrift in the



asteroid belt. They fused his rear jets. They burned out his front jets. They choked up his instruments with ether-dust. They put his chief engineer in bed with space-vertigo. They threw out his navigation officer and gave him a black spot over the entire star system. They eclipsed the sun. They punctured his hull with meteorites.

But Mr. Zytztz wasn't perturbed. He stood there on his stalk in the center of the room and listened attentively and courteously to each question, and gave the answers in his soft, unruffled voice.

He sent a man outside to burn off the fused portions of his rear jets. He took what was left of the front jets and welded them together. He sent the first mate to the engine-room. He navigated by watching the stars, and when they covered the stars he proved to the board that he could draw a line within thirty minutes of true north or within thirty minutes of any given right ascension without instruments of any kind.

That was magnificent. Mr. Zytztz had what might be called absolute orientation. They even put him in a seamless room and revolved and rolled him, and each time his sense of direction performed more accurately than any Earth compass, because it was built inside of him and it was *right*. . . .

He had them on all counts. The one thing they could have stuck him on—the actual details of repairing a piece of machinery—they didn't ask about.

He got his ticket. He got it and set off for the administration building as fast as he could shuffle, the precious book clutched firmly in his leaf-ends.

No, he didn't get a ship. He offered to take a third mate's berth, but they said they didn't have anything open. He wound up working for passage to Mars.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Philipusters Belong Outside*

SEVERAL months later Healey heard on the video that his father, Admiral Healy of the Stratosphere Fleet, had retired. It puzzled Healey, because his father was not an old man, and it wasn't like the Healeys to retire so early. Healey saw Pickens on his next landing, and Pickens gave him the story.

"Your father has tried for years to soften up the Air Marines so that you and all of the men who distinguished themselves in the Rocket Service could be restored to active status in the Marines, but they stalled him by saying that he, as an active officer, could not in good taste ask for anything of that sort. So he has retired and he is devoting the rest of his life to bring about a revision of the regulations. It could be, Admiral, that he is very proud of you." Pickens said the last words very softly.

"Yes." Healey was thoughtful. He'd like to see his father. He hadn't seen him since 2116. But if the old admiral didn't have any better luck with the Air Marines' Board on Discipline than Healey had had with the Classification Section, it would be wasted time.

Healey saw Mr. Zytztz many times in the next several years. Everyone in the space lanes knew the Martian. He would ship out as a seaman, or sometimes as bos'n's mate with a crew of Martians, and when he reached port, whether it was on Mars or Luna or Jupiter or Io or Callisto or Gany-

[Turn page]

## Dreams, Danger and Death on Venus!



David Heath finds Nirvana in an Incredible Valley  
of Phantoms Created by a Lunar Cataclysm in

## THE MOON THAT VANISHED

by LEIGH BRACKETT

NEXT ISSUE'S FEATURED NOVELET!

mede, he would make the rounds, carrying his master's license hopefully with him—but getting nowhere.

It hurt Healey, and the ironic twist of the whole thing caused him a good many restless nights. Then men in the Rocket Service, themselves outcasts of the Air Marines, had tried long and vainly to be recognized. Failing, they formed their own rigid caste. And now Mr. Zytztz was battering his head against the same stone wall of indifference, because he, Healey, who had been one of the most ardent in trying to re-establish himself in the Air Marines, had damned the Zytztzes the first day he had seen them. It caused Healey a lot of serious thought and a lot of self-reproach. As a matter of fact, he would have done anything within his power to make things right for Mr. Zytztz.

But the wall he himself had created was as stony as the one that had created him. He was arguing one day with the port captain on Luna, who had been first mate on the old *Phoebus*.

Finally the port captain said. "I can't give him a ship, Healey. You know that. He's a Martian."

"Well," said Healey stubbornly, "what's wrong with being a Martian?"

The captain exploded. "You know as well as I do that he isn't human. You said so yourself the first time you saw him!"

In 2150 the census showed: Martians, seven hundred and seventy-seven. All adults.

It was odd. Didn't they ever die?

Some years later Mr. Zytztz came back on the *Clarissa* again as escort for Healey. One night he was standing at a porthole watching *Vela* when he said:

"Admiral, why don't they give me a berth?"

Healey thought it over. He decided it was time to tell him. "It isn't any compliment to what we facetiously call humanity, but it's time you should know, so you won't keep batting your brains out."

"Yes?" Mr. Zytztz said quietly.

"They won't give you a berth because you're a Martian." Healey said flatly.

"I don't understand," Mr. Zytztz said slowly.

And Healey knew he would never understand. It wasn't Mr. Zytztz's code. He didn't realize how small Earth-men could be.

"Well, it's like this. Any Earth-man is afraid of anything or anybody that he thinks

might outdo him, physically, mentally, emotionally, artistically—or what have you. He resents it. And as long as he can hold the other person down, he's likely to. The Zytztzes are the best people in my book," Healey went on warmly, "but that just makes it tougher on you among those who don't know you. If you weren't so intelligent and unassuming and so temperamentally perfect, maybe Earth-men would like you. The way it is, you haven't got a chance."

MR. ZYTZTZ absorbed all that in silence. Finally Healey said as a clincher, "You may as well give it up. You'll never get a ship." He studied him then, and again he caught the strong feeling of that tremendous, illimitable patience that would conquer anything.

Healey did not retire in 2158. Atomic engines came out in a form adaptable to space ships. Space Travel, Inc., built a new ship called the *Philipuster*, and to Captain Browne's great disgust, the senator's niece splashed a third bottle of champagne on its magnificent burnished hull.

They talked Healey into staying on. It wasn't the money that influenced him, but the fact that there was nothing else for him to do. He had seen Admiral Pickens from time to time, and there was no denying that Pickens was lonely. He had plenty of friends, yes, but he couldn't go down to the Officers' Club and swap stories with the Air Marines. So Healey stayed on.

It was about this time that the Air Marines became the Space Marines.

The new atomic engines required comparatively nothing in the way of fuel. Where previously ninety per cent of a ship's load capacity had been used for fuel, now a few thousand pounds of plutonium or a few hundred pounds of americum from Jupiter could drive the *Philipuster* almost as far as a catboat could sail under the breeze from the senator's speeches.

Space Travel, Inc., thoughtfully doubled Healey's pay, because by now he was an institution. He told Browne the act of being the first man to step on Martian soil had given him more eminence than he could have earned in a thousand years.

Sometimes, after that, he would see Mr. Zytztz, shuffling in or out of a port captain's office or around the administration building at Havanaport, carrying his worn master's ticket in a leaf-tip. Sometimes he would look

haggard and limp, but always he seemed to hope.

Healey would have bought him a ship and given it to him, but he knew Mr. Zytztz would refuse it. He wanted—well, what did he want anyway? He wanted to be master of his own ship—and he had to earn that himself.

In 2160 the census showed no change in the Martians. In 2161 the Space Marines converted all their drives to atomics. Even the old *Phoebus*, now an antiquated tub used mostly for patrols to the moon and back, was equipped with brand new, late-type atomics that very nearly jerked her stanchions loose the first time they tried her out.

So it went until 2170. Healey had a Osterhus and was beginning to think seriously of retiring. Captain Browne ran the *Philipuster*. And Healey used to josh him whenever he showed signs of taking his duties too seriously.

"Some time I want to borrow the telephone of those three redheads you know back on Earth," Healey would say to Browne.

The *Philipuster* was a big ship. They had a crew of nearly two thousand, and on their quarterly trip in the fall of 2170, shortly after the census turned up the customary dearth of births among the Martians, Healey had aboard some fifty Zytztzes as crew members. They made much faster trips with the atomic drive, and so the Zytztzes could stand the jaunt to Jupiter without any trouble.

One night—they called it night because the ship's chronometer showed past 2100, although it was always dark in the ether—one night Mr. Zytztz was standing at a port-hole looking in the usual direction of the sky. Healey was sitting back in his padded chair smoking a good cigar, and Captain Browne was glancing over the reports prepared by his staff. A rustling came from Mr. Zytztz as he said:

"Do you know, Admiral, that in two years the law against post-mortem examinations of non-terrestrial creatures will expire?"

Healey stared at him. Mr. Zytztz was not yet past startling him.

"Well," Healey said finally, "maybe it would be a good thing. Maybe a post-mortem would show that you have eyes, and then you would be re-classified as humans."

Mr. Zytztz answered slowly, "Yes, a post-mortem would reveal eyes—of a kind that would startle Earth-people. But before one holds a post-mortem one must have a body."

"Oh, sure," he said, "but some day a Martian will die."

**D**ELIBERATELY Mr. Zytztz turned clear around. "We never die," he said quietly.

Healey grabbed at his cigar as it fell out of his open mouth. Captain Browne stared at Mr. Zytztz.

"No," said Mr. Zytztz, "for practical purposes we do not die. Our span of life is very long. Eleven thousand years is nothing to us."

Eleven thousand years? Healey frowned. That figure struck a chord somewhere in his mind, but he couldn't bring it to light. Healey looked hard at Mr. Zytztz.

"Is that why there are always seven hundred and seventy-seven Martians?"

The leaves nodded. "Yes, but I am afraid after the law becomes inoperative, there will be accidents and Martians will be killed."

Captain Browne rubbed his chin. "I don't believe you trust us, Mr. Zytztz," he said gently.

Mr. Zytztz seemed to sigh. "Humans are ruled so much by emotion, and so often those emotions are obscure," he observed.

"I guess you're right," said Browne. "They aren't all as obvious as Senator Philipuster."

"Er—ahem." There was a tremendous snort behind Healey and a great clearing of a throat. Healey spun around in his chair and his mouth dropped open again.

"Senator Philipuster! I didn't know you were on board."

"Just traveling—ahem—incognito, as it were. Don't like to attract so much attention, you know."

"I can well imagine," said Captain Browne, and Healey thought he detected a slight note of dryness.

"I—ahem—" The senator's bushy eyebrows raised toward Mr. Zytztz. "This fellow—he isn't an officer, is he?"

"He holds a master's ticket," Healey said sharply.

"But surely he's not an officer in the employ of my—of Space Travel, Inc."

"No, he is not," Healey said.

"And—ahem—isn't there a ruling that none but officers are allowed to loiter on the bridge?"

"There is," Healey said, and glared at him.

"Then—ahem—well—"



"That rule," Healey said firmly, "applies to civilians as well."

The senator blinked. "You impertinent young whippersnapper! How old are you?"

"Ninety last May."

"Why—ahem—I'm old enough to be your grandfather. I'm a hundred and thirty-two."

Healey got up from his chair. "Nevertheless, Senator, the rule says no loitering, as you pointed out." Healey ushered him to the door.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Derelict in Space*

WHEN the door was closed, with the senator on the other side, Captain Browne walked gravely up to Healey and made motions of pinning something on the lapel of his uniform.

"Your medal, Admiral," he said.

Mr. Zytztz started to shuffle out.

"No," Healey said. "Don't go. Sit down—er, stand up. Hang it, stay here while we talk over the price of old ivory."

Mr. Zytztz hesitated, then he seemed to smile, and he moved back to the porthole.

"Now, your senator there, he's not at all an obscure person. He is ruled by comparatively uncomplicated motives, and—"

"The first ten of which," Captain Browne said acidulously, "in order of importance, are 'Get the dough.'"

Mr. Zytztz seemed to go through the motions of a frown. "I don't wish to be a skeptic, Captain, but—"

"Unidentified object on the port bow, sir," came the voice of the lookout in the nose of the *Philipuster*.

A red light flashed. Captain Browne sprang to the video screen. Healey watched at his side.

"I don't make it out, sir," said Browne.

Mr. Zytztz was still at the porthole. "It is a ship," he said softly.

They watched. The lookout's voice came again.

"Unidentified object appears to be an abandoned ship, sir," he sang.

"Give position," Healey snapped.

"Azimuth three hundred and fifty-three degrees. Ascension five degrees plus. Distance about three thousand miles. Plane of

travel approximately zero with this ship's course. Angle of orbit"—a pause—"estimated at four degrees from the forward extension of this ship's course. Velocity"—another pause—"difficult to determine, but not great; direction of velocity, into the angle."

Browne relaxed. "We'll miss easily, unless the velocity turns out to be more than expected."

"Watch it," Healey ordered the lookout.

"Abandoned ship believed to be the IWC explorer *Phoebus*!" sang the lookout. Healey's eyes popped wide open. He stared at Browne. "What's the dope here? What happened to the *Phoebus*?"

Browne thumbed through the status reports. Mr. Zytztz had shuffled over toward them.

"Here," said Browne, looking up. "*Phoebus*: condemned two days ago and set adrift with a cargo of high explosive. Latest report is that the ship was not destroyed but only damaged. The tow ship *Rameses* is on the way to drag her from the spacelanes until further disposal is ordered."

Mr. Zytztz spoke, and for the first time in all the fifty years Healey had known him, there was sharpness in his voice.

"How is she classified?" he asked Browne.

"Derelict—temporarily."

Mr. Zytztz wheeled to Healey. "Derelict," he rustled, and it had a throaty sound. "She's derelict. I claim her as salvage, with you two as witnesses." Mr. Zytztz was all business. "That is the law, isn't it?"

Healey stared at him.

"Well—yes."

"Will you give me permission to take all the Martians aboard your ship to man the *Phoebus*?"

"Well, sure, we can get along, but—"

"Then put us off, please, Admiral." Mr. Zytztz said it eagerly.

"Well, now, look—" Healey was frowning hard.

Captain Browne moved to the speaker and looked at Healey. Healey sighed and nodded.

"Reverse fields and prepare to execute three-sixty righthand turn to full stop," Browne ordered.

Mr. Zytztz was positively beaming. "Thank you, sir," he said warmly. A leaf raised in salute and then he revolved and shuffled off down the corridor at high speed.

**B**ELLS began to jingle and whistles to blow, and signs appeared in the corridor on ground glass screens: QUIET PLEASE! THERE IS NO DANGER.

It was no small feat to stop a big ship in the ether, especially on such abrupt notice, and Space Travel, Inc., claimed it cost them in the neighborhood of forty thousand dollars to make a stop like that, in fuel wasted and damage to furnishings. There was one consolation voiced by Captain Browne as he braced himself:

"Maybe Senator Philipuster will fall and sprain his voice-box."

"That comes under the head of wishful thinking," Healey observed.

They stopped. Healey himself took Mr. Zytztz and his fifty or so fellow-Martians aboard the derelict. She was in pretty bad shape in the after hold. A gap as big as a railway locomotive showed in her hull. Things had been shaken up pretty badly. The pumping system was severely damaged and the oxygen pipes destroyed, controls beaten up, audio and video screens dead, but the atomic engines, for some reason, were not injured.

"Well, Mr. Zytztz, it can be done," Healey said after an inspection. "It can be fixed up, and it'll be your ship, but do you think you fellows can do it? You're not very handy at things like that? Want me to send you some help?"

"No," Mr. Zytztz said decisively. Healey knew what he was thinking. If they took an Earth-man with them, the Earth-man would have an equal share in the salvage, and Mr. Zytztz wanted the ship for him and his race alone.

Healey said, "Okay, good luck," and went on back to the *Philipuster*, but he was very thoughtful.

The senator asked several times on the way to Jupiter for an audience, but Healey had no intention of explaining why they had stopped at the height of trajectory, and so he evaded him.

They made their call at Jove and delivered three hundred passengers, mostly employees of Atompowerinc to work in the americium mines, and a couple of hundred thousand tons of food and supplies, and took on a load of passengers going back to Earth for a rest. Three months' work on Jupiter with its high gravity and artificial air required a man to rest three months on Earth before he could go back.

The *Philipuster* picked up nearly a hundred tons of pure americium and some plutonium which had been produced as a by-product.

Healey did not know what they would do with all the americium because they claimed the new atomic engines attained ninety per cent efficiency from atomic fission, and Healey knew that they could fly the *Philipuster* to Jupiter and back on no more americium than a strong man could carry on his back.

On the way to Earth Captain Browne said, "Do you suppose we might go anywhere near the *Phoebus*, sir?"

"We ought to," Healey growled. "You've been resetting the course every night to try to meet it."

Captain Browne turned a delicate shade of pea-green. "Sorry, sir," he said.

"Skip it. Just be sure you don't lose them."

Captain Browne was a good navigator. Eighty days later the lookout sang, "Unidentified object on the starboard bow, sir. Azimuth four degrees. Ascension two degrees plus. Distance ten thousand miles."

Healey was amused when a minute later the lookout called the *Phoebus*' name. Apparently the lookout, too, had been expecting to sight her.

The *Philipuster* was already reversing fields. They stopped and tied the *Phoebus* onto them and Admiral Healey and Captain Browne went aboard.

**T**HE Martians were glad to see them—Mr. Zytztz especially. They crowded around close, and Mr. Zytztz offered the tip of one of his leaves and Healey shook it firmly.

"How's it going?" asked Healey. "You look a little droopy."

"Very nicely," said Mr. Zytztz. "Very nicely."

Healey looked things over. They had patched up the oxygen system. They had juice in the batteries. They had tried to weld some plates over the big hole in the after hold but they hadn't been able to make the patch stick, and so they had sealed the bulkhead doors and were using only the forward two thirds of the ship. They had tried to repair the pumping system but the main pump was jimmied up and needed some pretty careful lathe work. Healey could see they had been trying to cut some bushings

for it, but they all looked like scrap. The lathes that had been left on the *Phoebus* were relics, anyway.

Healey looked at Mr. Zytztz again. "You're withered as the devil," he said. "Why don't you give this up and go back to Mars? You'll cave in if you don't."

Mr. Zytztz faced Healey for a moment, then he seemed to come to a decision. He led them into the control-room and they sat down while he paced the floor, shuffling back and forth on his stalk.

"You two men," he said presently, looking at Healey and Browne, "have always been friendly to us, and you two have done more to help us than all others put together. So I suppose I may as well be frank with you. . . . You think we're crazy for wanting a ship so much." He paused, then a sound like a sigh came from him. "Well, I'll let you decide for yourself. We've never told the whole story, because Earth-people are—well—" he searched for a delicate word—"Unpredictable."

Healey nodded grimly.

Mr. Zytztz shuffled over to a porthole and looked out toward the constellation Vela. Then he turned toward Healey and Browne, but one of his long leaves pointed through the porthole.

"We came from there eleven thousand years ago," he said.

Healey was not surprised. He had expected some such thing. "That is, you mean your forefathers."

"No," said Mr. Zytztz, his leaves rustling. "I mean we—the seven hundred and seventy-seven of us who are still alive."

Healey blinked. "That's right," Healey said. "You told me before that you live a long time. But you wouldn't if you were kept away from Mars all the time."

Zytztz answered, "I don't know. I only know that so much contact with humans wearies us with its—forgive me—with its pettiness and selfishness. We can't endure it without a pause."

"You've been alone here on the *Phoebus*."

Mr. Zytztz looked embarrassed. "I hesitate to say this, but humans leave their mark on everything they associate with. A small amount of their dominant emotions is absorbed even by metal and so on."

"Then, when you get to Mars you don't do anything mysterious at all," said Healey. "You just go out into the desert and rest."

"Wonderful relaxation," said Mr. Zytztz.

"That's all we did for eleven thousand years on Mars."

"And you don't have to eat?"

"Practically speaking, no. We can get along very nicely for a hundred years or so of active life, just absorbing what energy we need from the sunlight and the air. Of course, the way we were living on Mars before the *Phoebus* came we could live forever."

"What planet did you come from?"

Healey asked, looking through the porthole.

"The Fourteenth Planet of what you know as the star Gamma Velorum. It's a great deal like your Earth—physically speaking."

"Why in heck did you leave?" asked Browne. "To hunt up some new telephone numbers?"

MR. ZYTZTZ'S leaves rustled softly, as if he was smiling. "Not exactly. Our scientific council heard rumors from the Exploration Committee of a planet in the system of Pi Centaurus that Earth people were developing a highly organized social and political system, with a complex arrangement of strata in regard to persons themselves."

"You mean class distinction?" Healey said drily.

"Yes, that's about it. Well, you see, on our planet we never had been inclined to differences in position. We are not a highly organized people. In fact, there never has been any need for organization at all. Our physical wants are almost nil, so there has been no incentive for one to get ahead of the others. But our progress committee wanted to become familiar with Earth's system, because we work on the theory that everything of that sort has advantages. So seven hundred and seventy-seven of us were sent on a rocket ship which we bought from the robots of the Eighteenth Planet, to investigate Earth's social system."

"Wait a minute," said Healey, sitting up. "Did you say eleven thousand years ago?"

Mr. Zytztz nodded. "We landed on Earth and found a rather highly developed civilization—that is, compared to what you have now, of course, because I have no other standard. We became acquainted—"

One second, said Healey sharply. "What part of Earth did you visit?"

"There were only two continents that interested us. One in what is now approximately the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and



the other in what is now the Southwest Pacific."

Healey jumped up. "You don't say! Atlantis and Lemuria! That's what I argued in my thesis fifty years ago. That's what got me kicked out of active duty in the Air Marines. That's what made me an outcast. Those are the two continents that Senator Philipuster maintained were nothing but myths!"

"They were quite real then," said Mr. Zytztz.

"Well, I'll just be plain scuttled!"

## CHAPTER IX

### *Friends Indeed!*

**E**YES flashing with eagerness, Healey sat down again because he was weak from excitement. After all these years his graduation thesis had been vindicated. By Mr. Zytztz!

"There was only a chain of islands where your eastern mountains are in North America, and there were some primitive peoples in Egypt, and Southeastern Europe," Mr. Zytztz went on. "But the peoples of Atlantis and Lemuria, who had some interchange and seemed to have developed concurrently, had quite a modern civilization.

They had extensive family relationships, marriage, religion, and so on, but the thing that interested us most was the eminence given to persons of education, on the one hand, and persons who in one way or another had accumulated more possessions than they needed for their personal use."

"That hasn't changed," Captain Browne observed.

"How long did you stay there?"

"Almost a year. The so-called rulers took us in charge and just about convinced us their system was a good one and that we could profit by adaptation of it. What you sometimes call California Chamber of Commerce tactics, I believe."

Admiral Healey leaned forward. "Tell me just one thing, Mr. Zytztz—did they really have the secret of counteracting gravity?"

"Oh, yes, they did. Their methods of propulsion were crude compared to yours, but they had discovered how to control gravity very competently."

"Do you have that secret?"

Healey and Browne both held their breaths for the answer.

"Well, no, I don't, but I think I know where it is," Mr. Zytztz said slowly.

"Can you get it for me?" asked Healey.

"Yes, I think so."

Healey relaxed, his fingers drumming on the chair arm.

[Turn page]

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"Go on," he said. "How did you get stranded on Mars? You had a ship."

"I'm getting to that. We weren't satisfied with what we had seen on Earth. Something seemed, as you say, phony. So we decided to get away from the nervousness of Earth and think it over. We left, but a stowaway from the Lemurians turned up almost as soon as we were off the ground. He had been working in the factory where they made their crude aircraft. He was very excited.

"He told us we hadn't gotten the true picture at all; that there were ten unhappy and underprivileged persons to every one of the class we had known, that the ruling class had deliberately misinformed us and kept us from seeing the truth. He was, perhaps, a little fanatical, but he impressed us. We started to take him back to Earth, because obviously he couldn't go to Vela with us. But that excited him; he seized our controls. We operated on a beam that focused on the the gravitational power of a body and either attracted or repelled. He tried to do both at once and the controls went completely haywire. Pardon my Earth slang."

"Quite all right," Healey breathed, his eyes fixed on Mr. Zytztz.

"We swung into an orbit around Earth. We tried various things to get away, and—we aren't very handy at such things, you know. We somehow got our beam focused on Earth with all other gravitational influences nullified, and we circled Earth at terrific speed, with our centrifugal inertia counteracting the attractional force of the beam focused on Earth. We had to go faster and faster and after a few days we approached the speed of light. That gave us tremendous mass and pulled the earth a little out of its regular orbit. We were circling Earth across the poles, and presently the continent now known as America was pulled up out of the ocean bed by our mass, and the two continents of Lemuria and Atlantis were completely inundated by the tidal waves, and both continents disappeared under the water."

Healey took a deep breath. "So that's the story," he said at last.

"Yes," said Browne. "But how can you prove it?"

**A**T THIS Mr. Zytztz's leaves perked up. "Oh, I can prove it," he said. "We broke loose from Earth and finally landed on Mars. The stowaway spent all his time until

he died from lack of nourishment, writing the records of Lemuria. He told all he knew about their science, including the secret of counteracting gravity."

"Great sea of fire!" said Captain Browne, and Admiral Healey's eyes were gleaming with a strange fire that had not been there for many years.

Browne looked at him. "But would even that be enough to swing the Space Marines?" he asked Healey.

Healey's eyes narrowed. "It had better be. With the heat I could put on Senator Philipuster and through him on the Board of Discipline—Philipuster is one of the biggest shots in the world now, you know. Yes—he nodded with sudden conviction—"we can swing it, Captain." He looked up suddenly. "Who has this manuscript?" he asked Mr. Zytztz.

"It's in the Lemurian's grave back on Mars."

Healey was on his feet, his eyes blazing now.

"Oh, brother!" he murmured over and over. "Things are going to pop now."

Presently he turned to Mr. Zytztz. "So you crash-landed on Mars and you fellows couldn't fix up the ship because you're not so handy with tools, and the Lemurian didn't live long enough?"

"That's about the story. The ship rusted in spite of all we could do, and gradually disintegrated."

"And you've been waiting ever since to hitch a ride home," said Browne.

"What else was there to do?" asked Mr. Zytztz.

"I suppose that you've made up your mind about class distinctions by now?" Healey said a little acidulously.

Mr. Zytztz was slow in replying. "I think," he said finally, "that it is still short of perfection."

Healey snorted.

Browne said thoughtfully, "I can understand all this stuff about Lemuria and anti-gravity and so on. That's plain enough. But what I can't understand is: you've had eleven thousand years with nothing to do but wait. Why didn't you ever have any offspring on Mars?"

Healey imagined Mr. Zytztz was smiling softly to himself. "Because we're all males. Our wives and sweethearts are all back home in the Velorian system."

Browne gulped and stared at Healey.

"Well, no wonder they want a ship," he said. "After eleven thousand years on Mars, I'd want to get back home and raise some little Zytztzes myself."

Healey could not speak for a few minutes. So that was why they wanted a ship—to go home! Home to wives and sweethearts and children and families. Home! Home to a place that was "very much like Earth," after eleven thousand years of patient waiting on the red alkali of Mars.

How tremendously glad they must have been to see the *Phoebus* when she came down the first time. How they must have felt when Healey slammed the air-lock hatch on Mr. Zytztz's face!

Healey stood up. "I'm sold," he said quietly. "I'll see that you get her in, Captain Browne!"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Zytztz was murmuring softly; "I shall be very grateful."

"Captain Browne, send me some equipment over from the *Philipuster*—one complete machine-shop, a small forge, a plastic press, steel and brass stock, food and water. Make up a list. Everything you can think of. Send us all you can find on the *Philipuster*, and as soon as you reach Havanaport, ship the rest to Mars. And include ten tons of americium. That will be enough to take us—to take them to the edge of the universe and back."

Browne swallowed. "Ten tons, sir? That stuff is worth roughly a million dollars a ton."

"I've got three million dollars put away. Here, I'll give you a letter to my attorneys. Maybe—"

Mr. Zytztz interrupted softly. "We Zytztzes have several million dollars. It is magnificent of you to do this for us, but let us expend our common funds first."

"Yea," Healey growled. "I guess you'll have to do that. And we'll still be short a few million dollars. But get it shipped anyway, Captain. My credit ought to be worth something."

"I'm willing to lend you what I have, but that isn't very much," said Browne. "And Atompowerinc will take a mortgage on your soul for the balance."

"Don't worry me with details," said Healey. "Get the stuff."

"Yes, sir."

Captain Browne took the letter from Healey and one from Mr. Zytztz and went

back through the airlocks. Presently equipment began to stream across the gangplanks. Everything went well until the ten tons of americium began to come over in small black boxes that held twenty-five pounds each.

Healey was a little surprised to see it for he had figured it would be necessary for Captain Browne to do some fast fenagling on Earth to get that, but apparently Browne was taking things into his own hands on the theory that possession is pretty good title.

## CHAPTER X

### *Mr. Zytztz Goes to Mars*

**B**ROWNE was moving pretty fast, but Senator Philipuster moved almost as fast. In no time at all he came stamping aboard, not so impressive in a space-suit and oxygen mask.

"I'll have you know, sir, you can't tamper with private property this way," he snorted after he got off his oxygen-mask with jerky fingers.

"I'll have you know that I am master of the *Philipuster* and all aboard her," Healey told him. "I deem this fuel necessary to save this crew of Martians from disaster." There! He felt better. He already had cleared Browne.

The senator sputtered. "But the Martians came from our own ship."

"Perhaps they did, but Mr. Zytztz here claimed the *Phoebus* as salvage. Before witnesses."

The senator exploded. His face was red. "But ten tons of americium—"

"It will be paid for," Healey said.

"It's outrageous. They don't need that much to get to Mars."

"I deem it necessary for their salvage operations."

Mr. Zytztz shuffled up. The senator was swelling. "Mr. Zytztz is captain of the *Phoebus* now," Healey said pointedly.

The senator glared and turned purple. "I'll have your ticket for this, you whipper-snapper," he barked at Healey, and stamped back across the gangplank.

The *Philipuster* pulled away in charge of Captain Browne, and Admiral Healey rolled up his sleeves and went to work on the *Phoebus*. At ninety he wasn't ancient, but



he wasn't as young as he had been, and he was soft. Nevertheless, he worked long, long hours showing the Zytztzes how to fix things.

When his muscles got stiff, he worked to limber them. He got the pumps going. He himself went outside in a space-suit and welded up the hull. They tore out the damaged partitions. They replaced pipes for water and compressed air, and Healey tested and checked the communications.

The Zytztzes worked tirelessly. They could do things if someone would show them how. And one day, three months later, they turned on the power and straightened the *Phoebus* out of her lazy end-over-end floating and took off for Mars. They reached the red planet in six weeks and landed at the spaceport. Captain Browne was already there with a load of supplies he'd brought himself on a special trip.

He told Healey the money situation wasn't too good. Atompowerinc wasn't sticking out its neck yet by refusing delivery, but they were firm in asking full payment for the americium. It worried Healey a little. That is, he worried for fear that Atompowerinc would attach the *Phoebus* before they could get started for Gamma Velorum. But he didn't say anything about it to Mr. Zytztz.

He went ahead and turned the *Phoebus* over to a repair crew at Space Travel, Inc.'s, spaceport, so the *Phoebus* could be made really ship-shape. That would cost money, too, but the Zytztzes couldn't start a sixty-year trip in a ruptured duck. Then Healey set about getting legal title to the *Phoebus* in the name of Mr. Zytztz.

As soon as the repair work was finished, Healey started loading operations. It would take about three days to get the *Phoebus* loaded, with trucks running in and out of her hold like yellow ants, so Healey turned the job over to Captain Browne, who was waiting for orders, while he and Mr. Zytztz took a trip into the desert to find the Lemurian's grave.

That was no trouble. The Zytztzes had buried the Lemurian in a solid rock cavern and then had cemented it so it was air-tight. A couple of sticks of dynamite opened it.

When the dust cleared out, Healey and Mr. Zytztz went inside.

**T**HEY found the body—or what was left of it—a faint white outline of a skeleton, formed in bone-dust on the rocky floor. They also found the lead casket that the Zytztzes

had sealed shut. In it was a manuscript written in ink on fine parchment. Some two hundred pages, but Healey shook his head when he saw the writing. It was faint but still legible, but Healey said:

"That's almost identical with Mayan hieroglyphs, but it doesn't do us any good, because nobody has ever been able to decipher Mayan. They're probably the same language."

Mr. Zytztz wagged his leaves. "That needn't bother you. I can remember enough of Lemurian writing to compile a key. In fact, if you'll give me a stenographer who can understand my speech, I think I could translate this for you in a couple of days—roughly, at least."

Healey stared at him. "You're a wonder if you can do that."

When they got back to the spaceport, Browne was worried. "A man came in the liner from Earth looking for Mr. Zytztz. He appeared to be a process-server."

Healey looked haggard. "He mustn't find Zytztz. Keep him away. Tell him Mr. Zytztz has gone to Pluto to sell toothbrushes to earthworms. Tell him anything. And whip up this loading. How much longer?"

Browne shook his head. "Two days more, anyway, I'm afraid. There's a load of stuff, sir."

So Healey isolated Mr. Zytztz in an office at the back of a drug store under the spaceport, with a stenographer who had enough imagination to understand the Zytztz language, while he himself went to push the loading.

But next morning Mr. Zytztz sent word for Healey to come. When Healey got there, Mr. Zytztz handed him ninety pages of tele-written copy.

Healey was amazed but he was not surprised. He leafed through the manuscript and when he found the section on anti-gravity he uttered a yell.

"What this won't do to people like Senator Philipuster," he said, and chuckled.

"Simple, too, don't you think?" asked Mr. Zytztz.

Healey clucked his tongue. "Far easier than atomic power. And you can see that it will have to work. It's really nothing but an electronic adaptation of an old type of video circuit. What it does is get inside of gravitational power instead of trying to fight it."

Healey left Mr. Zytztz in hiding while he

went to the video office and transmitted a long message to the Discipline Board, including the information on anti-gravity, and asked them formally to investigate his claim that this was a genuine Lemurian manuscript. That was enough. The Discipline Board knew the angles. They would get the picture—but fast.

Two days later, from over the desert came the Zytztzes, seven hundred and seventy-six of them, streaming into the *Phoebus* to go back home. They counted them seven times to be sure, because there wouldn't be any refunds on that trip.

They had just finished the seventh count when Healey turned around to face a man in a brown suit.

"Mr. Zytztz here yet?"

"No," Healey said grimly. "He isn't here."

"Well, I suppose he will be pretty soon. Looks like you're getting ready to take off."

Healey growled in his throat. He wondered how this fellow would like to take a long one-way trip, but he knew Mr. Zytztz would never approve violence—if he knew about it.

They warmed up the engine, with the brown-suited man standing fast in the control-room, although Healey did his best to walk all over him every time he turned around. Finally Healey went outside and got Browne.

"Bring Mr. Zytztz," he said grimly. "I may have to give this bird a tap on the jaw and take him with us, but get Mr. Zytztz! The *Phoebus* is ready to roll."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Browne with alacrity.

"You skunk!" Healey said softly. "You'd like to see some violence."

"Could be," Browne said.

**H**EALEY went back to the ship. Now there was a messenger in a blue suit waiting for him.

"Sign here, Admiral," he said.

Healey signed. He tore open the envelope with nervous fingers and read the single sheet:

John Healey, Care Spaceport, Mars. Have investigated claim of Lemurian manuscript. Electronics experts verify gravitational synchronizer. This board considers your claim established. On recommendation of Senator Philipuster you are hereby restored to active duty in the International Space Marines with rank of admiral. Report for duty with Stratosphere Fleet within thirty days.

Jennings, Captain, I.S.M.  
Secretary of Board of Discipline.

Healey blinked. He read it again. Then he drew a tremendous breath, and his chest began to fill with a feeling that he had hungered for since 2117. He was an admiral in the Space Marines—the sixth Admiral Healey.

The goodness of the feeling flowed over him like the morning sun, and he wanted to shout it to all of Mars.

But the brown-suited man was waiting on the bridge. Healey looked through the port and he saw Mr. Zytztz shuffling rapidly up the gangplank. Healey looked at the brown-suited man and drew back his fist. It was ironic that his first act as admiral in the Space Marines would be an act of lawlessness that would damn the memory of Healeys forever.

The brown-suited man turned, his chin in exactly the right spot. He looked puzzled at Healey's drawn-back arm.

There was a shout from the air-lock. Captain Browne rushed in waving a message.

"They restored me to active duty!" he shouted. "They're restoring everybody who was in the Rocket Service at the time we first landed on Mars."

He read from the message.

FOR MERITORIOUS SERVICE IN ADVANCING  
THE CAUSE OF SCIENCE.

He pounded Healey on the back. "I'm a full-fledged captain in the Space Marines!"

Healey straightened and glowered at him. "I am your admiral," he said stiffly.

Browne gulped, then he straightened and saluted. "Yes, sir. Sorry, sir."

"And besides," said Healey, "you blamed near knocked me over." He grinned and put out his hand. "Shake, Captain!"

Mr. Zytztz was shuffling excitedly in the controlroom. He was waving some papers, too.

"They've just handed me a receipt for all supplies and all work done on the *Phoebus*. What does this mean?"

"Mr. Zytztz?" asked the man in the brown suit, and shoved an official-looking paper at him.

Healey took the first papers from Mr. Zytztz and scanned them. "Holy jumping —" He stopped. It was too much for him. "Senator Philipuster," he said finally to Browne, "has personally paid or guaranteed all bills incident to the outfitting of the

*Phoebus* for the trip to Gamma Velorum."

Browne stared and his mouth dropped open. "Well, I'll be scuppered!" he said slowly.

The man in the brown suit was already gone. Admiral Healey, I.S.M., looked at Captain Browne, I.S.M., and blinked his eyes and shook his head.

Browne took the papers served on Mr. Zytztz. "I'll have these cancelled."

Mr. Zytztz came up softly. "I'm very glad for both of you, gentlemen."

"Thanks," they said.

Mr. Zytztz's leaves were waving and dancing. "You've been more than kind, Admiral. Thank you very much for everything. And that is very small thanks."

"Skip it," Healey said gruffly.

One of Mr. Zytztz's leaf-tips took Captain Browne's hand.

"You, Captain, have done more than your part—much more."

"That's okay," Browne said casually, and Healey knew he was embarrassed.

**B**ROWNE turned and said to Healey, "Let's be going—sir."

Healey held out his hand to Browne. The captain took it before he realized what he was doing, then he laughed.

Browne said, "See you at the Spaceport Bar tonight."

"No, Captain, I guess not," Healey answered. He turned to the desk and wrote something on a sheet of paper. He handed it to Browne. There was a puzzled frown around the captain's eyes.

"What's this?"

Healey swallowed hard. "That, Captain, is my resignation from the Space Marines."

Browne's eyes popped open. "What the devil are you saying? Are you crazy, sir?"

"I'm going with Mr. Zytztz," Healey said.

Browne reached blindly for a place to sit. He sat down and began to mutter and shake his head as if to clear away the cobwebs.

"They've got to have somebody," said Healey doggedly. "If anything should go wrong on the trip they'd be utterly lost. They can't make things or repair things. The *Phoebus* is an old ship. There'll be lots of little things go wrong. They've got to have me. Don't you see?" His tone was almost pleading.

Browne looked at him. Healey knew that Browne was thinking of that day when they had planted the flag on Mars, and Healey

had slammed the air-lock door in Mr. Zytztz's face. Browne stood up. He took the resignation in his hand, snapped to attention, saluted smartly. He started to speak, but there seemed to be something wrong with his throat. He wheeled and marched stiffly into the air-lock.

Mr. Zytztz seemed to be studying Healey. "You may do this if you wish, Admiral, but it really is not necessary."

"You know mighty well it's necessary," Healey said. "Besides, maybe I can pick up a few phone numbers when we get to Vela."

Mr. Zytztz's leaves rustled softly. "You will be an old man when we reach home. You'll never live to get back to Earth."

"Close the hatches," Healey ordered. "Prepare to take off. It's a long trip."

Mr. Zytztz hesitated. Then one leaf raised in a regal salute.

They lifted her off the concrete. She slanted up and up and up at tremendous speed, and then, free of Mars' gravitational influence, curved downward into the sixty-year trajectory that would bring them to Gamma Velorum in the southern skies.

The next day they were out far past Uranus and still accelerating at a constant two gravities. Two faint messages came on the videophone. One said:

CONGRATULATIONS, ADMIRAL, AND BEST WISHES. I GUESS THERE'S NOBODY FUNNIER THAN PEOPLE.—PICKENS, ADMIRAL, I.S.M., RETIRED.

The other said:

JOHN HEALEY, ADMIRAL, I.S.M., RETIRED. CONGRATULATIONS ON BECOMING THE SIXTH ADMIRAL. WISH I COULD HAVE SHAKEN YOUR HAND, BUT YOU KNOW WHAT IS BEST. GOOD LUCK FROM YOUR DAD.—MARK HEALEY, ADMIRAL, I.S.M., RETIRED.

Healey looked up. Mr. Zytztz was on the bridge. He was facing Vela. His leaves were rustling gently. He was going home. And from the way he was staring through the porthole, Healey knew his eyes were open.

Healey softly folded the last message and put it carefully in his breast-pocket. He walked over and stood beside Mr. Zytztz and looked toward Vela. Healey's eyes were open, too, but they were wet.





Fahnes fired the flame-gun again, then strode into the temple

# Regulations

*by Murray Leinster*

**I**T WAS only the dew-god making a monstrous noise off in the darkness, but Fahnes allowed his eyes to open and he halfway sat up. There was a shaded light over by Boles' bunk, and Boles was

fussily arranging his kit for a journey to the trading-center in the Lamphian hills. Food, canteens, and the trading-stuff, these things would be left at the untended mart in exchange for a new lot of Hossa fiber, which on

*Visions of great wealth turn Fahnes into a killer when he loots the Dew God's temple on Oryx, but retribution waits!*

Earth was equal in exchange pound for pound with platinum.

Fahnes made an apologetic noise as Boles whirled at his movement. Boles snorted indignantly.

"It's just one of them gods," he said scornfully. "They make a racket like that before dawn every mornin'."

Fahnes made himself grin sheepishly, as if half-awake. He knew about the dew-god. He had more brains than Boles, and he knew more than Boles about all the things that really mattered on Oryx, though he'd only been on the small planet five months. Because of his knowledge, he'd been awake for hours, feverishly debating with himself whether as a matter of common-sense he had not better murder Boles this mornin'. There were reasons for killing him, but it would be satisfying to let Boles come back from the Lamphian hills to find the trading-post in ashes, the Honkie village a mere black scar on the green surface of Oryx, and the supply-ship come and gone.

It would be amusing, too, to picture Boles trying to live on Oryx without supplies from Earth until another ship came to reestablish trade. Fahnes inclined not to do murder, this morning, so Boles could learn what a fool he'd been. Meanwhile Boles regarded him in a superior fashion.

"I know," said Fahnes. He yawned, now. "But the racket does seem louder than usual, this morning. I wonder—"

"Regulations say native customs an' religions ain't to be messed with," said Boles inflexibly. "You ain't paid to wonder. Quit it."

Boles checked off his equipment on a list. Then he glanced at the instrument-bank and laboriously began to copy the regulation before-dawn observations into the post's log-book. Temperature. Humidity—always from 97 to 100 per cent in the day time, but sometimes dropping to a conservative 90 at night. Ionization-constant of the air. Fahnes watched the ironic zest. A lot of good these observations were!

He said impatiently, "I can fix the log, Boles. I'm going to do it while you're gone."

"While I'm here," said Boles dogmatically, "regulations say I got to do it. When I'm gone, regulations say you do it. You stick to regulations, Fahnes, an' you'll get along."

**T**HE unholy racket which was the dew-god off beyond the jungle seemed to

grow louder yet. No man, it was said in the *Instructions for Oryx*, had ever yet seen a dew-god. But the native deities were of extreme importance to the Honkies, and the maintenance of trade-relations required that their religion should be undisturbed.

"Blister it!" said Fahnes, in private irony but seeming peevisishness. "I wish regulations would let a man do something about that racket. It's tough to be waked up every morning by some kind of Honkie god with a voice like sixteen steam-whistles in different keys all going at once."

Boles struggled into his waterproof garments. On Oryx, where it never rains, one naturally wears waterproof clothing.

"Listen here!" said Boles firmly. "You get this! Before this post was set up, the Comp'ny had a survey-party on Oryx for months. You read the report. They studied the place, an' the natives, an' they made up regulations for this special planet. They're good regulations. You follow 'em an' you'll do all right. Same way with the Honkies."

"They found out, somehow, what hadda be done to get along. They didn't do it scientific, but like human people did back in the old days. They didn't call what they found out regulations. They called it religion. But it works. It's good regulations, for Honkies. You get the idea that Honkie religion is good regulations for them, an' ain't to be meddled with. Then you won't get into no trouble."

"I assure you," said Fahnes sarcastically, "I shan't try to make the Honkies atheists."

"Yeah," said Boles. "That's it. Don't."

Boles zipped his suit shut. He began to struggle into the various straps which would hold the articles of his equipment about him. Fahnes watched with concealed amusement. The Honkie religion was not to be meddled with?

The windows of the trading-post rattled from a sudden special uproar from the god. He, Fahnes, knew things about the Honkie religion that Boles didn't, that the survey-party, apparently, hadn't found out. Gods which roared in the darkness could arouse the curiosity even of a man like Fahnes, who despised such stupidities as gods and regulations. Fahnes had taken satisfaction in breaking the regulations about Honkies under Boles' very nose. He'd set up a camera and flashbulb and trigger-string off where the dew-god roared even now and he, Fahnes, had a photograph of a dew-god.

The blinding flash of the flash-bulb had startled it. It had crashed into a jungle-tree in its flight. And at the scene of the accident—the crystal was in the pocket of Fahnes' sleeping-suit—he'd found a memento of Honkie religion. It had been torn from the headdress of the dew-god. The photograph of the dew-god told how many more such mementos the dew-god wore in his headdress. So Fahnes had planned murder for this morning, and was still in two minds about its necessity. The prospects before him were enough to make a man giddy.

But he wasn't giddy. His plan was carefully worked out. It was so brilliant that he'd honestly regretted that nobody would ever know how magnificent it had been. But there'd been two breaks—one a space-radio message and the other this decision of Boles' to make the trip. Fahnes could leave Boles alive to realize his situation, if he chose. When Boles came back, six days from now, he'd understand. Not completely, perhaps, but a memento—a small one, left on a stick where he'd be sure to see it—would enable him to piece out the story bit by bit as he tried hopelessly to live until another ship came to rebuild human trade on Oryx.

Boles was festooned with all the impedimenta that regulations said should be carried on any journey on Oryx. It was still dead-dark outside. The dew-god still roared, though more faintly now.

"All right," said Boles curtly. "I'm off. Mind, you stick to regulations while I'm gone!"

"Just which ones do you think I'm planning to break?" asked Fahnes ironically. "The ones about leaving native women alone?"

Boles shook his head, unsmiling. Oryx females, with a greenish, semi-chitinous skin, were definitely not appealing to humans.

"Nope," said Boles heavily. "But you ain't got the right attitude. Regulations got sense behind 'em—even the Honkie regulations that they think are religion. Maybe I'd better—" He hesitated, and Fahnes knew coldly that Boles' life hung in the balance without his knowing anything at all about it. "Oh, well," Boles said at last, and thereby removed the need for murder. "I guess you'll make out. So long."

**H**E WENT out of the door and closed it behind him. Fahnes heard small splashing in between the dew-god's roar-

ings. There was never any rain on Oryx. Never. So by dawn the jungle-trees were coated with dew in monstrous droplets. Boles, moving through the supple growths, marched sturdily under a constant waterfall from the trees, his progress disturbed.

Then Fahnes laughed softly to himself. He took his hand from below the dry-blanket a man has to sleep under, on Oryx, if he isn't to wake in a pool of water. He had a bolt-pistol in his fingers. All the time Boles talked, there'd been that bolt-pistol ready to kill him. Perhaps—just possibly—it had been a mistake to let him live. But he'd gone off unarmed, anyhow. There was no need of weapons on Oryx. The Honkies didn't kill things. Their religion forbade it. And besides men had red blood like Honkies, and there was a religious prohibition against Honkies ever looking at anything which was red.

Fahnes got up and made an adjustment on the space-radio. It had been silent for four days—since he heard the first notice from the supply-ship that it was ten days ahead of schedule and would arrive before Boles expected it. He still didn't expect it, because Fahnes hadn't told him. And he'd gone off, now, and the ship would have come and gone and many things would have happened before his return. Now Fahnes readjusted the set for reception and dressed leisurely, smiling to himself.

Off through the jungle, the noise of the dew-god died away. Fahnes glanced through the trading-post window. There was grayness to the east where the local sun rose. No coloring at all. Just light. As he watched, the white disk of the sun appeared. There was never any rain on Oryx, and the reason for that anomaly also prevented colorings in the sky at dawn and sunset.

Oryx was a magnesium planet. Magnesium was omnipresent on its surface, as sodium is everywhere on Earth. The chloride was the common compound. And just as on earth there is salt in some concentration everywhere, so on Oryx there was magnesium chloride in the body-fluids of the Honkies and the insects—there were no animals to speak of—and in the sap of the trees, and impregnated in every particle of the soil. The results were outstanding, because magnesium chloride is deliquescent to a high degree. \*

\* (Note.) A deliquescent substance is one which absorbs moisture from the air until it can dissolve in the water it has collected.



**E**VERYTHING on Oryx, therefore, attracted moisture to itself, and held it. Everything on the planet was at least moist. If dust were formed by some extraordinary event, it could not remain dust on the ground. It would stick, because of dampness.

So there was no dust on Oryx, and since there was no dust, there could be no sunset or sunrise coloring, no condensation of moisture on dust-particles to form clouds, and therefore no rain. And since there could be no rain there could be no brooks, ponds, pools, or lakes. The jungle covered everything, watered by dew which could only condense on solid substances because there was nothing else for it to condense on.

It was not a pleasant environment for men, but the Honkies lived in it contentedly with their soapstone implements and houses, and their elaborate religion with its ceremonies and taboos. Their culture was low. They had no fire, because there had never been lighting to show them that such a thing could be. They had no metals, because metals cannot be smelted without a fire. They lived a life of elaborate ritual.

Even the location of their villages was determined by a religious abhorrence of the color red. Cultivation of land with a red-clay under-soil was therefore impossible. But the local village was safe against accidental impiety. The fields in which the dew-god had roared were of a slaty-blue, sticky soil which Fahnes knew by experience was incredibly adhesive until the sun dried it.

He breakfasted comfortably. So far he had not done a single overt act save the muting of the space-radio, and that could not ever be proved. He had not murdered Boles. He could drop everything, make a formal report to the Company on what he had discovered, and undoubtedly receive a promotion and a few hundred credits a year more pay. He was enormously amused at the stupidity of which some men would be capable, when they could do as he was going to, and spend the rest of his life in the luxury and lavish enjoyment only unlimited riches could provide. But Fahnes, of course, was very clever. He approved of himself very much.

He finished his breakfast and looked out again. The sun was just two diameters high and the top of the jungle was a scintillating glory. Huge dew-drops covered every leaf. Each reflected all the rays of the sun. The

landscape seemed covered with diamonds, save where Boles had marched. The jungle-trees he'd touched in passing were no longer jewel-studded. Their movements as he pushed them aside had made the dew coalesce and run down. His trail was clear. He had gone on to the Lamphian hills.

The restored space-radio muttered curtly:

CHECK FOR ORYX TRADING-POST. COURSE AND SPEED HELD. WE WILL LAND AT YOUR POST IN THIRTY-TWO HOURS FIFTEEN MINUTES, EARTH MEASURE."

It was a repeat-notification from the supply-ship on the way.

That was the last thing Fahnes needed to be sure of. He buckled the pistol-belt about him. He went into the store-room and opened a soldered case in which a flame-rifle had remained in store since the post was opened. He cleaned it carefully. He loaded it from ammunition packed with it. He went to the store-room door and aimed at the jungle. He pulled trigger.

There was a ten-yard circle of pure devastation. Smoke poured up. Then it stopped. Smoke-particles do not remain smoke in air which is super-saturated with moisture. Water condenses upon them. They become droplets of mist. The mist becomes rain. An appreciable shower fell upon the smouldering jungle-spot. The smouldering embers went out.

Fahnes grinned. He had not anticipated that, but it was amusing. Everything was amusing today. The sun rose higher and the glittering dew evaporated. It did not form a mist, but made the air actually thick to breathe. Fahnes remembered an authoritative lecture from Boles. Each dew-drop, said Boles, was a tiny burning-glass as long as it remained. Until it dried up it focused morning sunlight on the leaf under it, scorching its own support. So the roaring of the dew-god every morning, so loud that leaves vibrated near it, shook the dew-drops into flowing fluid which ran off. The Honkie crops, then, weren't scorched. But without the dew-god, the Honkies would starve.

**F**AHNES slung the flame-rifle over his shoulder, made sure the bolt-pistol was ready for action, and marched off toward the Honkie village. There were four or five hundred Honkies in the soapstone huts of the settlement. They were greenish in tint, and

while their skin was not in actual plates like insects, it was thick and stiff and really flexible only at the joints. They were solemn-faced and quiet and lived their whole lives in impassioned absorption in their religion, as Boles lived his in devotion to regulations. Boles said that their religion was regulations, and that it made sense. But Fahnes had no religion, and he heeded no regulations save those he made himself.

The jungle dried about him as he walked. There was no longer the sensation of walking under a traveling shower-bath. It was—save for the wet thickness of the air—not uncomfortable. In half an hour he reached the slaty-blue soil on which the crops of the Honkie village were grown. He grinned excitedly and began to cross it toward the village. But he found himself slackening his pace to look at the soil absordedly.

He realized, and chuckled to himself. He needn't look for mementos in the ground, here! The Honkies would have attended to that for him! He continued to grin as he pressed on. He was in open sunshine, now, with shoulder-high plants about him and the huddled soapstone huts of the village in clear view ahead. And he saw Honkies in the fields. They were working the crops. They used preposterously-shaped hoes and dug busily around the plants which formed their food-supply.

Out of the corner of his eye Fahnes saw them look at him, but he could never catch one actually in the act of staring. He'd expected protests, and the flame-rifle was ready, but whenever he jerked his head about, the Honkie he essayed to catch was absorbed in his agricultural labor.

This, of course, was unexpected. It was forbidden for humans to enter Honkie villages. The Company regulations by which Boles lived specifically forbade it under any and all conditions. It was a violation of basic principle. Men must not enter Honkie villages! It was forbidden by Honkie religion!

For a man to enter a Honkie village was sacrilege. It was blasphemy! It was crime! But the Honkies seemingly pretended not to notice. Fahnes grew irritated. He was ready to use the flame-gun to force his way in, after what he knew was there. He was prepared to deal out murder wholesale. His intention to commit what the regulations called crime was obvious. But the Honkies feigned obliviousness.

They grew thicker as he neared the vil-

lage. Male Honkies. Female Honkies. Smaller ones—male and female indiscriminately—scuttled about the taller figures who were adults. All eyed him furtively and knew that he committed sacrilege against their gods in approaching a village. None made any gesture, any actual sign, which really acknowledged his existence. Fahnes stopped short a bare ten feet from a male Honkie elaborately piling up dirt around the root-stock of a plant.

"My friend," said Fahnes ironically, knowing the Honkie would not understand. "I admire your industry. But isn't it a bit futile? Shouldn't you defend your gods and hearth and home? Don't you realize that I'm going into your village? Don't you even suspect I intend to rob your loudest-voiced god? In short, don't you think you ought to do something? Of course, if you do I will certainly kill you, but this pretense of not noticing me is silly."

The Honkie labored on, his leathery, expressionless face giving no sign that he heard the man's words. Fahnes grew jumpy, and his eyes turned ugly for no especial reason.

"What's the matter?" he asked, sneering. "You're afraid for that green skin of yours? Where's your piety! Here I am about to commit sacrilege against what I'm assured is a most important religion—and you pretend not to notice!"

The Honkie hoed on. Fahnes spat suddenly.

"To the devil with you!" he cried violently. He hated the green-skinned native of Oryx simply because he was about to commit a crime against the whole tribe. He needed resistance to assure himself of his courage and cleverness. He craved fear in his victims. He wanted to be able to live over, in his own mind, a scene of splendid derring-do as the source of the lavish luxury in which he would live for the rest of his life. "You're as big a fool as Boles! You and your gods! He and his regulations! To the devil with all of you!"

**H**E GLARED at the lean, unhuman figure which ploddingly moved on to the next plant and began to hoe there, having given no sign whatever that it knew that Fahnes was present.

Fahnes marched on, chewing upon rage. He passed other Honkies. Many of them. All pretended not to see him. He was definitely not afraid. The flame-gun could de-

stroy all the Honkies on Oryx, if they tried to attack him. But he raged because he could not understand this embarrassed ignoring of his presence.

Then he reached the village. Every house was built of blocks of soapstone, carved to perfection and ornamented with elaborate designs for which Fahnes, at this moment, had no taste. The soapstone, Boles had said, had been brought on Honkie-back for fifty miles or more, just so the village could be built where there was no red clay under the soil to be turned up by an incautious hoe. It had stood here for generations. Perhaps for a thousand years.

It seemed to be deserted, but Fahnes knew better. The Honkies in the villages were not showing themselves, so that they might the more effectually pretend that he was not there. It was insult. It was stupidity. It denied the courage and the cunning and the cleverness of Fahnes, who had defied Honkie gods and Company regulations to go there and rob the god who roared hideously in the last hour before dawn.

He unsling the flame-rifle. He'd made his plans carefully, and more Honkies would not spoil them. White with tension and with unreasonable rage, he prepared to force the Honkies to play the part he had assigned them. The trick would be the swift and murderous use of destruction to clear the village of those who remained in it in hiding, and to force them to fury against him.

A brisk looting of the temple of the dew-god, facing him where he stood, would follow, and then a completely ruthless march back to the trading-post, using the flame-gun mercilessly to make his retreat secure, yet so sparingly that the maddened Honkies would yet have hopes of overwhelming him for his sacrilege and murder.

When the supply-ship dropped from the sky, the Honkies would be besieging the trading-post. His tale of a religious frenzy beginning with the murder of Boles—who was not murdered at all—would be convincing. Under regulations, there would be nothing for the supply-ship skipper to do but evacuate the trading-post, carrying Fahnes and the loot he'd have hidden, to the nearest civilized plant, where he would vanish utterly, with wealth incalculable.

And he'd demand that the skipper give the village a bath in take-off-jet flame as the supply-ship rose skyward. With the tale he'd tell, that would be a certainty. It would

prove his rage, because normally only a man in frenzy demands revenge, and Boles had an extraordinary popularity among the employees of the Consolidated Trading Company.

He fired. Coruscating flame enveloped the nearest house. There was the roar of suddenly-expanded air and of burning. A second blast of ravening destruction. A third—a fourth!

He saw a few, furtive, fugitive movements. The Honkies in the village had fled. They were still fleeing. His scheme was working as it would continue to work, and as Boles would some day figure it out with a single crystalline memento of the Honkie religion left behind for him, as an overwhelmingly lucid clue.

Fahnes now had the village utterly to himself. Swearing horribly for no cause, his throat dry and his eyes raging, he went into the temple of the dew-god to acquire the riches he knew were there. They had to be there. A brainy man like Fahnes had worked out, from a photograph of a dew-god from whose headdress a glittering crystal had dropped, from blue clay like the blue clay of Kimberley, on Earth, and from sheer logic, a brainy man like Fahnes had worked out an absolutely air-tight case proving that there was wealth incalculable in the temple.

**T**HE antiquity of the village only increased the estimate. Honkies had cultivated the blue-clay fields for probably a thousand years. Worshipping the dew-god, and finding bright crystals which looked like solidified dew-drops and reflected the sun as the dew did, surely they would make votive offerings of such crystals!

He wore strings of them upon his headdress! Fahnes had one in his pocket now, dropped by the god when frightened by a flash-bulb! Even the headdress would make Fahnes rich, but it was mathematically certain that for a thousand years every Honkie had devoutly turned over to the temple every rough diamond found in the growing-fields. And a thousand years of such devoutness, would mean untold wealth.

He fired the flame-gun again from sheer destructiveness, then went snarling into the temple, ready to deal out death to anyone who dared to dispute anything with him.

\* \* \* \* \*

The tall Honkie squatted on the ground outside the trading-post and worriedly

moutherd his few words of Terrestrial speech. Boles listened with an air of indignation.

"Your runner caught up to me an' brought me back," Boles said dogmatically. "Accordin' to regulations I got to help you out any way I can. But this is bad!"

The Honkie struggled again to convey his meaning in Earth language. Then he fell back upon his own tongue.

"Lord," he said with dignity. "It was the dew-god's doing. We do not understand. The man came through our fields, approaching our village. And this was against the Law, so all our people pretended not see, lest he be shamed. Yet he had no shame even in breaking the Law. He shouted at us in the fields. He went to the village, where again those who were present pretended not to see. Then he took an instrument we know not and struck houses with it, destroying everything."

"A flame-gun," said Boles, scowling. "This is goin' to make trouble. He busted regulations."

"He went into the temple of the dew-god," the worried Honkie chieftain went on with dignified emphasis, "and there are bright stones which look like the dew, save that they do not vanish in the sunlight. They are also hard, and we carve our bowls and houses with them. But often, because they are like the dew, we give them to the dew-god. The man seemed to desire them greatly. He tore them from the walls of the temple where they are set. And then he saw the inner part of the temple where the dew-god's holiness stays. We had put the most beautiful of the bright stones there, and the dew-god's holiness covered them. But the man desired the stones so greatly that he threw himself into the dew-god's holiness, and he could not endure it. So he died."

"The dew-god's holiness, eh?" said Boles skeptically.

"The dew-god," said the Honkie chief practically, "shakes the dew from our crops before dawn, so that they do not change color and grow uneatable like the wild things of the jungle. One of us, each morning, carries his headdress and blows his horn for him among the crops. As the dew falls from the leaves it hurries to the dew-god's temple. Each morning dew-drops by millions run into his temple and gather in a great, deep gathering which is the holiness of the dew-god. And we place the brightest stones there to welcome them."

Boles blinked. Then he jumped.

"Holy?" he cried. "The dew's like a rain-storm, shook off all at once, an' you got a drainage system. Sure! You got a dewpond in the temple! A lake! A swimmin'-pool, full of shook-off dew. An' bright stones were there?"

"Lord, the bright stones are covered by the holiness for a large space," said the Honkie chieftain apologetically. "And the man seemed to desire them greatly. If we had understood, we would have given them to him. We bring them from a great distance, but it is our religion freely to give one another the things that are most desirable. If it is the custom of men to desire those bright stones, we would surrender them."

**B**OLES looked at the glittering handful of crystals he had taken from the pockets of Fahnes, after the Honkies had brought him back.

"It ain't worth while," he said vexedly. "They' what man call zircons. They' pretty, but there ain't any value to 'em for trade. They' just hard enough to use as tools to cut soapstones. Fahnes thought they were diamonds, I guess. When he saw a swimming-pool carpeted with diamonds on the bottom he went outa his head. He dived for 'em. An' the pool's prob'ly deeper than it looks. He hopped in to grab zircons he thought was diamonds, an' there wasn't any steps like a swimmin'-pool should have, an' he couldn't get out again. So he drowned—on Oryx, where it never rains. Good grief!"

"The dew-god destroyed him because he broke the law," said the Honkie respectfully.

"He died because he was a fool who didn't keep to regulations," said Boles caustically.

There was a booming noise overhead. It grew and grew in volume. It became a monstrous roar. It was so loud that the leaves of the jungle-trees quivered.

The supply-ship descended smoothly, creating a tumult which seemed to shake the very ground. And Boles stood up and clenched his fists in the ultimate of exasperation.

"He musta known this!" Boles cried furiously. "He knew the ship was comin' in ahead of schedule. It was his job to listen on space-radio when news comes through. But he didn't tell me, an' me with no stuff packed for shipment an' due to catch tarnation for holdin' up the ship! Blast him! It's his fault. He shoulda kept to regulation."





The android uttered a protesting cry as Kelvin sent a wave of mental energy at him

# HAPPY ENDING

By HENRY KUTTNER

*Out of the Future emerge the Robot and Karn—while James Kelvin fights them blindly, knowing not friend from foe!*

**T**HIS is the way the story ended: James Kelvin concentrated very hard on the thought of the chemist with the red mustache who had promised him a million dollars. It was simply a matter of tuning in on the man's brain, establishing a rapport. He had done it before. Now it was

more important than ever that he do it this one last time. He pressed the button on the gadget the robot had given him, and thought hard.

Far off, across limitless distances, he found the rapport.

He clamped on the mental tight beam.

He rode it. . . .

The red-mustached man looked up, gaped, and grinned delightedly.

"So there you are!" he said. "I didn't hear you come in. Good grief, I've been trying to find you for two weeks."

"Tell me one thing quick," Kelvin said. "What's your name?"

"George Bailey. Incidentally, what's yours?"

But Kelvin didn't answer. He had suddenly remembered the other thing the robot had told him about that gadget which established rapport when he pressed the button. He pressed it now—and nothing happened. The gadget had gone dead. Its task was finished, which obviously meant he had at last achieved health, fame and fortune. The robot had warned him, of course. The thing was set to do one specialized job. Once he got what he wanted, it would work no more.

So Kelvin got the million dollars.

And he lived happily ever after. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

This is the middle of the story:

As he pushed aside the canvas curtain something—a carelessly hung rope—swung down at his face, knocking the horn-rimmed glasses askew. Simultaneously a vivid bluish light blazed into his unprotected eyes. He felt a curious, sharp sense of disorientation, a shifting motion that was almost instantly gone.

Things steadied before him. He let the curtain fall back into place, making legible again the painted inscription: HOROSCOPES—LEARN YOUR FUTURE—and he stood staring at the remarkable horomancer.

It was a—oh, impossible!

The robot said in a flat, precise voice, "You are James Kelvin. You are a reporter. You are thirty years old, unmarried, and you came to Los Angeles from Chicago today on the advice of your physician. Is that correct?"

**I**N HIS astonishment Kelvin called on the Deity. Then he settled his glasses more firmly and tried to remember an exposé of charlatans he had once written. There was some obvious way they worked things like this, miraculous as it sounded.

The robot looked at him impassively out of its faceted eye.

"On reading your mind," it continued in the pedantic voice, "I find this is the year Nineteen Forty-nine. My plans will have to be revised. I had meant to arrive in the

year Nineteen Seventy. I will ask you to assist me."

Kelvin put his hands in his pockets and grinned.

"With money, naturally," he said. "You had me going for a minute. How do you do it, anyhow? Mirrors? Or like Maelzel's chess player?"

"I am not a machine operated by a dwarf, nor am I an optical illusion," the robot assured him. "I am an artificially created living organism, originating at a period far in your future."

"And I'm not the sucker you take me for," Kelvin remarked pleasantly. "I came in here to—"

"You lost your baggage checks," the robot said. "While wondering what to do about it, you had a few drinks and took the Wilshire bus at exactly—exactly eight-thirty-five past meridian."

"Lay off the mind-reading," Kelvin said. "And don't tell me you've been running this joint very long with a line like that. The cops would be after you. If you're a real robot, ha, ha."

"I have been running this joint," the robot said, "for approximately five minutes. My predecessor is unconscious behind that chest in the corner. Your arrival here was sheer coincidence." It paused very briefly, and Kelvin had the curious impression that it was watching to see if the story so far had gone over well.

The impression was curious because Kelvin had no feeling at all that there was a man in the large, jointed figure before him. If such a thing as a robot were possible, he would have believed implicitly that he confronted a genuine specimen. Such things being impossible, he waited to see what the gimmick would be.

"My arrival here was also accidental," the robot informed him. "This being the case, my equipment will have to be altered slightly. I will require certain substitute mechanisms. For that, I gather as I read your mind, I will have to engage in your peculiar barter system of economics. In a word, coinage or gold or silver certificates will be necessary. Thus I am—temporarily—a horomancer."

"Sure, sure" Kelvin said. "Why not a simple mugging? If you're a robot, you could do a super-mugging job with a quick twist of the gears."

"It would attract attention. Above all, I require secrecy. As a matter of fact, I am—"

The robot paused, searched Kelvin's brain for the right phrase, and said, "—on the lam. In my era, time-traveling is strictly forbidden, even by accident, unless government-sponsored."

There was a fallacy there somewhere, Kelvin thought, but he couldn't quite spot it. He blinked at the robot intently. It looked pretty unconvincing.

"What proof do you need?" the creature asked. "I read your brain the minute you came in, didn't I? You must have felt the temporary amnesia as I drew out the knowledge and then replaced it."

"So that's what happened," Kelvin said. He took a cautious step backward. "Well, I think I'll be getting along."

"Wait," the robot commanded. "I see you have begun to distrust me. Apparently you now regret having suggested a mugging job. You fear I may act on the suggestion. Allow me to reassure you. It is true that I could take your money and assure secrecy by killing you, but I am not permitted to kill humans. The alternative is to engage in the barter system. I can offer you something valuable in return for a small amount of gold. Let me see." The faceted gaze swept around the tent, dwelt piercingly for a moment on Kelvin. "A horoscope," the robot said. "It is supposed to help you achieve health, fame and fortune. Astrology, however, is out of my line. I can merely offer a logical scientific method of attaining the same results."

"Uh-huh," Kelvin said skeptically. "How much? And why haven't you used that method?"

"I have other ambitions," the robot said in a cryptic manner. "Take this." There was a brief clicking. A panel opened in the metallic chest. The robot extracted a small, flat case and handed it to Kelvin, who automatically closed his fingers on the cold metal.

"Be careful. Don't push that button until—"

But Kelvin had pushed it. . . .

**H**E WAS driving a figurative car that had got out of control. There was somebody else inside his head. There was a schizophrenic, double-tracked locomotive that was running wild and his hand on the throttle couldn't slow it down an instant. His mental steering-wheel had snapped. Somebody else was thinking for him!

Not quite a human being. Not quite sane, probably, from Kelvin's standards. But awfully sane from his own. Sane enough to have mastered the most intricate principles of non-Euclidean geometry in the nursery.

The senses get synthesized in the brain into a sort of common language, a master-tongue. Part of it was auditory, part pictorial, and there were smells and tastes and tactile sensations that were sometimes familiar and sometimes spiced with the absolutely alien. And it was chaotic.

Something like this, perhaps. . . .

"—Big Lizards getting too numerous this season—tame threvvars have the same eyes not on Callisto though—vacation soon—preferably galactic—solar system claustrophobic—byanding tomorrow if square rootola and upsliding three—"

But that was merely the word-symbolism. Subjectively, it was far more detailed and very frightening. Luckily, reflex had lifted Kelvin's finger from the button almost instantly, and he stood there motionless, shivering slightly.

He was afraid now.

The robot said, "You should not have begun the rapport until I instructed you. Now there will be danger. Wait." His eye changed color. "Yes . . . there is . . . Tharn, yes. Beware of Tharn."

"I don't want any part of it," Kelvin said quickly. "Here, take this thing back."

"Then you will be unprotected against Tharn. Keep the device. It will, as I promised, ensure your health, fame and fortune, far more effectively than a—a horoscope."

"No, thanks. I don't know how you managed that trick—sub-sonics, maybe, but I don't—"

"Wait," the robot said. "When you pressed that button, you were in the mind of someone who exists very far in the future. It created a temporal rapport. You can bring about that rapport any time you press the button."

"Heaven forfend," Kelvin said, still sweating a little.

"Consider the opportunities. Suppose a troglodyte of the far past had access to your brain? He could achieve anything he wanted."

It had become important, somehow, to find a logical rebuttal to the robot's arguments. "Like St. Anthony—or was it Luther?—arguing with the devil?" Kelvin thought dizzily. His headache was worse, and he

suspected he had drunk more than was good for him. But he merely said:

"How could a troglodyte understand what's in my brain? He couldn't apply the knowledge without the same conditioning I've had."

"Have you ever had sudden and apparently illogical ideas? Compulsions? So that you seem forced to think of certain things, count up to certain numbers, work out particular problems? Well, the man in the future on whom my device is focused doesn't know he's in rapport with you, Kelvin. But he's vulnerable to compulsions. All you have to do is concentrate on a problem and then press the button. Your rapport will be compelled—illogically, from his viewpoint—to solve that problem. And you'll be reading his brain. You'll find out how it works. There are limitations, you'll learn those too. And the device will ensure health, wealth and fame for you."

"It would ensure anything, if it really worked that way. I could do anything. That's why I'm not buying!"

"I said there were limitations. As soon as you've successfully achieved health, fame, and fortune, the device will become useless. I've taken care of that. But meanwhile you can use it to solve all your problems by tapping the brain of the more intelligent specimen in the future. The important point is to concentrate on your problems *before* you press the button. Otherwise you may get more than Tharn on your track."

"Tharn? What—"

"I think an—an android," the robot said, looking at nothing. "An artificial human . . . However, let us consider my own problem. I need a small amount of gold."

"So that's the kicker," Kelvin said, feeling oddly relieved. He said, "I haven't got any."

"Your watch."

**K**ELVIN jerked his arm so that his wrist-watch showed. "Oh, no. That watch cost plenty."

"All I need is the gold-plating," the robot said, shooting out a reddish ray from its eye. "Thank you." The watch was now dull gray metal.

"Hey!" Kelvin cried.

"If you use the rapport device, your health, fame and fortune will be assured," the robot said rapidly. "You will be as happy as any man of this era can be. It will solve all your problems—including Tharn.

Wait a minute." The creature took a backward step and disappeared behind a hanging Oriental rug that had never been east of Peoria.

There was silence.

Kelvin looked from his altered watch to the flat, enigmatic object in his palm. It was about two inches by two inches, and no thicker than a woman's vanity-case, and there was a sunken push-button on its side.

He dropped it into his pocket and took a few steps forward. He looked behind the pseudo-Oriental rug, to find nothing except emptiness and a flapping slit cut in the canvas wall of the booth. The robot, it seemed, had taken a powder. Kelvin peered out through the slit. There was the light and sound of Ocean Park amusement pier, that was all. And the silvered, moving blackness of the Pacific Ocean, stretching to where small lights showed Malibu far up the invisible curve of the coastal cliffs.

So he came back inside the booth and looked around. A fat man in a swami's costume was unconscious behind the carved chest the robot had indicated. His breath, plus a process of deduction, told Kelvin that the man had been drinking.

Not knowing what else to do, Kelvin called on the Deity again. He found suddenly that he was thinking about someone or something called Tharn, who was an android.

Horomancy . . . time . . . rapport . . . *no!* Protective disbelief slid like plate armor around his mind. A practical robot couldn't be made. He knew that. He'd have heard—he was a reporter, wasn't he?

Sure he was.

Desiring noise and company, he went along to the shooting gallery and knocked down a few ducks. The flat case burned in his pocket. The dully burnished metal of his wrist-watch burned in his memory. The remembrance of that drainage from his brain, and the immediate replacement burned in his mind. Presently bar whiskey burned in his stomach.

He'd left Chicago because of sinusitis, recurrent and annoying. Ordinary sinusitis. Not schizophrenia or hallucinations or accusing voices coming from the walls. Not because he had been seeing bats or robots. That thing hadn't really been a robot. It all had a perfectly natural explanation. Oh, sure.

Health, fame and fortune. And if—  
**THARN!**



The thought crashed with thunderbolt impact into his head.

And then another thought: *I am going nuts!*

A silent voice began to mutter insistently, over and over, "Tharn—Tharn—Tharn—Tharn—"

And another voice, the voice of sanity and safety, answered it and drowned it out. Half aloud, Kelvin muttered:

"I'm James Noel Kelvin. I'm a reporter—special features, leg work, rewrite. I'm thirty years old, unmarried, and I came to Los Angeles today and lost my baggage checks and—and I'm going to have another drink and find a hotel. Anyhow, the climate seems to be curing my sinusitis."

Tharn, the muffled drum-beat said almost below the threshold of realization. *Tharn, Tharn.*

*Tharn.*

He ordered another drink and reached in his pocket for a coin. His hand touched the metal case. And simultaneously he felt a light pressure on his shoulder.

Instinctively he glanced around. It was a seven-fingered, spidery hand tightening—hairless, without nails—and white as smooth ivory.

The one, overwhelming necessity that sprang into Kelvin's mind was a simple longing to place as much space as possible between himself and the owner of that disgusting hand. It was a vital requirement, but one difficult of fulfilment, a problem that excluded everything else from Kelvin's thoughts. He knew, vaguely, that he was gripping the flat case in his pocket as though that could save him, but all he was thinking was:

*I've got to get away from here.*

The monstrous, alien thoughts of someone in the future spun him insanely along their current. It could not have taken a moment while that skilled, competent, trained mind, wise in the lore of an unthinkable future, solved the random problem that had come so suddenly, with such curious compulsion.

**T**HREE methods of transportation were simultaneously clear to Kelvin. Two he discarded; motorplats were obviously inventions yet to come, and quirling—involving, as it did, a sensory coil-helmet—was beyond him. But the third method—

Already the memory was fading. And that hand was still tightening on his shoulder.

He clutched at the vanishing ideas and desperately made his brain and his muscles move along the unlikely direction the future-man had visualized.

And he was out in the open, a cold night wind blowing on him, still in a sitting position, but with nothing but empty air between his spine and the sidewalk.

He sat down suddenly.

Passersby on the corner of Hollywood Boulevard and Cahuenga were not much surprised at the sight of a dark, lanky man sitting by the curb. Only one woman had noticed Kelvin's actual arrival, and she knew when she was well off. She went right on home.

Kelvin got up, laughing with soft hysteria. "Teleportation," he said. "How did I work it? It's gone . . . Hard to remember afterward, eh? I'll have to start carrying a notebook again."

And then—"But what about Tharn?"

He looked around, frightened. Reassurance came only after half an hour had passed without additional miracles. Kelvin walked along the Boulevard, keeping a sharp lookout. No Tharn, though.

Occasionally he slid a hand into his pocket and touched the cold metal of the case. Health, wealth and fortune. Why, he could—

But he did not press the button. Too vivid was the memory of that shocking, alien disorientation he had felt. The mind, the experiences, the habit-patterns of the far future were uncomfortably strong.

He would use the little case again—oh, yes. But there was no hurry. First, he'd have to work out a few angles.

His disbelief was completely gone. . . .

Tharn showed up the next night and scared the daylights out of Kelvin again. Prior to that, the reporter had failed to find his baggage tickets, and was only consoled by the two hundred bucks in his wallet. He took a room—paying in advance—at a medium-good hotel, and began wondering how he might apply his pipe-line to the future. Very sensibly, he decided to continue a normal life until something developed. At any rate, he'd have to make a few connections. He tried the *Times*, the *Examiner*, the *News*, and some others. But these things develop slowly, except in the movies. That night Kelvin was in his hotel room when his unwelcome guest appeared.

It was, of course, Tharn.

He wore a very large white turban, ap-

proximately twice the size of his head. He had a dapper black mustache, waxed downward at the tips like the mustache of a mandarin, or a catfish. He stared urgently at Kelvin out of the bathroom mirror.

Kelvin had been wondering whether or not he needed a shave before going out to dinner. He was rubbing his chin thoughtfully at the moment Tharn put in an appearance, and there was a perceptible mental lag between occurrence and perception, so that to Kelvin it seemed that he himself had mysteriously sprouted a long moustache. He reached for his upper lip. It was smooth. But in the glass the black waxed hairs quivered as Tharn pushed his face up against the surface of the mirror.

It was so shockingly disorienting, somehow, that Kelvin was quite unable to think at all. He took a quick step backward. The edge of the bathtub caught him behind the knees and distracted him momentarily, fortunately for his sanity. When he looked again there was only his own appalled face reflected above the wash-bowl. But after a second or two the face seemed to develop a cloud of white turban, and mandarin-like whiskers began to form sketchily.

Kelvin clapped a hand to his eyes and spun away. In about fifteen seconds he spread his fingers enough to peep through them at the glass. He kept his palm pressed desperately to his upper lip, in some wild hope of inhibiting the sudden sprouting of a moustache. What peeped back at him from the mirror looked like himself. At least, it had no turban, and it did not wear horn-rimmed glasses. He risked snatching his hand away for a quick look, and clapped it in place again just in time to prevent Tharn from taking shape in the glass.

**S**TILL shielding his face, he went unsteadily into the bedroom and took the flat case out of his coat pocket. But he didn't press the button that would close a mental synapse between two incongruous eras. He didn't want to do that again, he realized. More horrible, somehow, than what was happening now was the thought of reentering that alien brain.

He was standing before the bureau, and in the mirror one eye looked out at him between reflected fingers. It was a wild eye behind the gleaming spectacle-lens, but it seemed to be his own. Tentatively he took his hand away. . . .

This mirror showed more of Tharn. Kelvin wished it hadn't. Tharn was wearing white knee-boots of some glittering plastic. Between them and the turban he wore nothing whatever except a minimum of loin-cloth, also glittering plastic. Tharn was very thin, but he looked active. He looked quite active enough to spring right into the hotel room. His skin was whiter than his turban, and his hands had seven fingers each, all right.

Kelvin abruptly turned away, but Tharn was resourceful. The dark window made enough of a reflecting surface to show a lean, loin-clothed figure. The feet showed bare, and they were less normal than Tharn's hands. And the polished brass of a lamp-base gave back the picture of a small, distorted face not Kelvin's own.

Kelvin found a corner without reflecting surfaces and pushed into it, his hands shielding his face. He was still holding the flat case.

Oh, fine, he thought bitterly. Everything's got a string on it. What good will this rapport gadget do me if Tharn's going to show up every day? Maybe I'm only crazy. I hope so.

Something would have to be done unless Kelvin was prepared to go through life with his face buried in his hands. The worst of it was that Tharn had a haunting look of familiarity. Kelvin discarded a dozen possibilities, from reincarnation to the *déjà vu* phenomenon, but—

He peeped through his hands, in time to see Tharn raising a cylindrical gadget of some sort and leveling it like a gun. That gesture formed Kelvin's decision. He'd have to do something, and fast. So, concentrating on the problem—I want out!—he pressed the button in the surface of the flat case.

And instantly the teleportation method he had forgotten was perfectly clear to him. Other matters, however, were obscure. The smells—someone was thinking—were adding up to a—there was no word for that, only a shocking visjo-auditory ideation that was simply dizzying. Someone named Three Million and Ninety Pink had written a new flat. And there was the physical sensation of licking a twenty-four-dollar stamp and sticking it on a postcard.

But, most important, the man in the future had had—or would have—a compulsion to think about the teleportation method, and as Kelvin snapped back into his own mind

and time, he instantly used that method. . . .

He was falling.

Icy water smacked him hard. Miraculously he kept his grip on the flat case. He had a whirling vision of stars in a night sky, and the phosphorescent sheen of silvery light on a dark sea. Then brine stung his nostrils.

Kelvin had never learned how to swim.

As he went down for the last time, bubbling a scream, he literally clutched at the proverbial straw he was holding. His finger pushed the button down again. There was no need to concentrate on the problem; he couldn't think of anything else.

Mental chaos, fantastic images—and the answer.

It took concentration, and there wasn't much time left. Bubbles streamed up past his face. He felt them, but he couldn't see them. All around, pressing in avidly, was the horrible coldness of the salt water. . . .

But he did know the method now, and he knew how it worked. He thought along the lines the future mind had indicated. Something happened. Radiation—that was the nearest familiar term—poured out of his brain and did peculiar things to his lung-tissue. His blood cells adapted themselves. . . .

He was breathing water, and it was no longer strangling him.

But Kelvin had also learned that this emergency adaptation could not be maintained for very long. Teleportation was the answer to that. And surely he could remember the method now. He had actually used it to escape from Tharn only a few minutes ago.

**Y**ET he could not remember. The memory was expunged cleanly from his mind. So there was nothing else to do but press the button again, and Kelvin did that, most reluctantly.

Dripping wet, he was standing on an unfamiliar street. It was no street he knew, but apparently it was in his own time and on his own planet. Luckily, teleportation seemed to have limitations. The wind was cold. Kelvin stood in a puddle that grew rapidly around his feet. He stared around.

He picked out a sign up the street that offered Turkish Baths, and headed moistly in that direction. His thoughts were mostly profane. . . .

He was in New Orleans, of all places. Presently he was drunk in New Orleans. His

thoughts kept going around in circles, and Scotch was a fine palliative, an excellent brake. He needed to get control again. He had an almost miraculous power, and he wanted to be able to use it effectively before the unexpected happened again. Tharn. . . .

He sat in a hotel room and swigged Scotch. Gotta be logical!

He sneezed.

The trouble was, of course, that there were so few points of contact between his own mind and that of the future-man. Moreover, he'd got the rapport only in times of crisis. Like having access to the Alexandrian Library, five seconds a day. In five seconds you couldn't even start translating. . . .

Health, fame and fortune. He sneezed again. The robot had been a liar. His health seemed to be going fast. What about that robot? How had he got involved, anyway? He said he'd fallen into this era from the future, but robots are notorious liars. Gotta be logical. . . .

Apparently the future was peopled by creatures not unlike the cast of a Frankenstein picture. Androids, robots, so-called men whose minds were shockingly different. . . . Sneeze. Another drink.

The robot had said that the case would lose its power after Kelvin had achieved health, fame and fortune. Which was a distressing thought. Suppose he attained those enviable goals, found the little push-button useless, and then Tharn showed up? Oh, no. That called for another shot.

Sobriety was the wrong condition in which to approach a matter that in itself was as wild as delirium tremens, even though, Kelvin knew, the science he had stumbled on was all theoretically quite possible. But not in this day and age. Sneeze.

The trick would be to pose the right problem and use the case at some time when you weren't drowning or being menaced by that bewhiskered android with his seven-fingered hands and his ominous rod-like weapon. Find the problem.

But that future-mind was hideous.

And suddenly, with drunken clarity, Kelvin realized that he was profoundly drawn to that dim, shadowy world of the future.

He could not see its complete pattern, but he sensed it somehow. He knew that it was right, a far better world and time than this. If he could be that unknown man who dwelt there, all would go well.

Man must needs love the highest, he

thought wryly. Oh, well. He shook the bottle. How much had he absorbed? He felt fine.

Gotta be logical.

Outside the window street-lights blinked off and on. Neons traced goblin languages against the night. It seemed rather alien, too, but so did Kelvin's own body. He started to laugh, but a sneeze choked that off.

All I want, he thought, is health, fame and fortune. Then I'll settle down and live happily ever after, without a care or worry. I won't need this enchanted case after that. Happy ending.

On impulse he took out the box and examined it. He tried to pry it open and failed. His finger hovered over the button.

"How can I—" he thought, and his finger moved half an inch. . . .

It wasn't so alien now that he was drunk. The future man's name was Quarra Vee. Odd he had never realized that before, but how often does a man think of his own name? Quarra Vee was playing some sort of game vaguely reminiscent of chess, but his opponent was on a planet of Sirius, some distance away. The chessmen were all unfamiliar. Complicated, dizzying space-time gambits flashed through Quarra Vee's mind as Kelvin listened in. Then Kelvin's problem thrust through, the compulsion hit Quarra Vee, and—

**I**T WAS all mixed up. There were two problems, really. How to cure a cold—coryza. And how to become healthy, rich and famous in a practically prehistoric era—for Quarra Vee.

A small problem, however, to Quarra Vee. He solved it and went back to his game with the Sirian.

Kelvin was back in the hotel room in New Orleans.

He was very drunk or he wouldn't have risked it. The method involved using his brain to tune in on another brain in this present twentieth century that had exactly the wave-length he required. All sorts of factors would build up to the sum total of that wave-length—experience, opportunity, position, knowledge, imagination, honesty—but he found it at last, after hesitating among three totals that were all nearly right. Still, one was righter, to three decimal points. Still drunk as a lord, Kelvin clamped on a mental tight beam, turned on the teleportation, and rode the beam across America to a

well-equipped laboratory where a man sat reading.

The man was bald and had a bristling red moustache. He looked up sharply at some sound Kelvin made.

"Hey!" he said. "How did you get in here?"

"Ask Quarra Vee," Kelvin said.

"Who? What?" The man put down his book.

Kelvin called on his memory. It seemed to be slipping. He used the rapport case for an instant, and refreshed his mind. Not so unpleasant this time, either. He was beginning to understand Quarra Vee's world a little. He liked it. However, he supposed he'd forget that too.

"An improvement on Woodward's protein analogues," he told the red-moustached man. "Simple synthesis will do it."

"Who the devil are you?"

"Call me Jim," Kelvin said simply. "And shut up and listen." He began to explain, as to a small, stupid child. (The man before him was one of America's foremost chemists.) "Proteins are made of amino acids. There are about thirty-three amino acids—"

"There aren't."

"There are. Shut up. Their molecules can be arranged in lots of ways. So we get an almost infinite variety of proteins. And all living things are forms of protein. The absolute synthesis involves a chain of amino acids long enough to recognize clearly as a protein molecule. That's been the trouble."

The man with the red moustache seemed quite interested. "Fischer assembled a chain of eighteen," he said, blinking. "Abderhalden got up to nineteen, and Woodward, of course, has made chains ten thousand units long. But as for testing—"

"The complete protein molecule consists of complete sets of sequences. But if you can test only one or two sections of an analogue you can't be sure of the others. Wait a minute." Kelvin used the rapport case again. "Now I know. Well, you can make almost anything out of synthesized protein. Silk, wool, hair—but the main thing, of course," he said, sneezing, "is a cure for coryza."

"Now look—" said the red-moustached man.

"Some of the viruses are chains of amino acids, aren't they? Well, modify their structure. Make 'em harmless. Bacteria too. And synthesize antibiotics."



"I wish I could. However, Mr.—"

"Just call me Jim."

"Yes. However, all this is old stuff."

"Grab your pencil," Kelvin said. "From now on it'll be solid, with riffs. The method of synthesizing and testing is as follows—"

He explained, very thoroughly and clearly. He had to use the rapport case only twice. And when he had finished, the man with the red moustache laid down his pencil and stared.

"This is incredible," he said. "If it works—"

"I want health, fame and fortune," Kelvin said stubbornly. "It'll work."

"Yes, but—my good man—"

However, Kelvin insisted. Luckily for himself, the mental testing of the red-moustached man had included briefing for honesty and opportunity, and it ended with the chemist agreeing to sign partnership papers with Kelvin. The commercial possibilities of the process were unbounded. Dupont or GM would be glad to buy it.

"I want lots of money. A fortune."

"You'll make a million dollars," the red-moustached man said patiently.

"Then I want a receipt. Have to have this in black and white. Unless you want to give me my million now."

**F**ROWNING, the chemist shook his head. "I can't do that. I'll have to run tests, open negotiations—but don't worry about that. Your discovery is certainly worth a million. You'll be famous, too."

"And healthy?"

"There won't be any more disease, after a while," the chemist said quietly. "That's the real miracle."

"Write it down," Kelvin clamored.

"All right. We can have partnership papers drawn up tomorrow. This will do temporarily. Understand, the actual credit belongs to you."

"It's got to be in ink. A pencil won't do."

"Just a minute, then," the red-moustached man said, and went away in search of ink. Kelvin looked around the laboratory, beaming happily.

Tharn materialized three feet away. Tharn was holding the rod-weapon. He lifted it.

Kelvin instantly used the rapport case. Then he thumbed his nose at Tharn and teleported himself far away.

He was immediately in a cornfield, somewhere, but undistilled corn was not what

Kelvin wanted. He tried again. This time he reached Seattle.

That was the beginning of Kelvin's monumental two-week combination binge and chase.

His thoughts weren't pleasant.

He had a frightful hangover, ten cents in his pocket, and an overdue hotel bill. A fortnight of keeping one jump ahead of Tharn, via teleportation, had frazzled his nerves so unendurably that only liquor had kept him going. Now even that stimulus was failing. The drink died in him and left what felt like a corpse.

Kelvin groaned and blinked miserably. He took off his glasses and cleaned them, but that didn't help.

What a fool.

He didn't even know the name of that chemist!

There was health, wealth and fame waiting for him just around the corner, but what corner? Some day he'd find out, probably, when the news of the new protein synthesis was publicized, but when would that be? In the meantime, what about Tharn?

Moreover, the chemist couldn't locate him, either. The man knew Kelvin only as Jim. Which had somehow seemed a good idea at the time, but not now.

Kelvin took out the rapport case and stared at it with red eyes. Quarra Vee, eh? He rather liked Quarra Vee now. Trouble was, a half hour after his rapport, at most, he would forget all the details.

This time he used the push-button almost as Tharn snapped into bodily existence a few feet away.

The teleportation angle again. He was sitting in the middle of a desert. Cactus and Joshua trees were all the scenery. There was a purple range of mountains far away.

No Tharn, though.

Kelvin began to be thirsty. Suppose the case stopped working now? Oh, this couldn't go on. A decision hanging fire for a week finally crystallized into a conclusion so obvious he felt like kicking himself. Perfectly obvious!

Why hadn't he thought of it at the very beginning?

He concentrated on the problem: How can I get rid of Tharn? He pushed the button. . . .

And, a moment later, he knew the answer. It would be simple, really.

The pressing urgency was gone suddenly.

That seemed to release a fresh flow of thought. Everything became quite clear.

He waited for Tharn.

He did not have to wait long. There was a tremor in the shimmering air, and the turbaned, pallid figure sprang into tangible reality.

The rod-weapon was poised.

Taking no chances, Kelvin posed his problem again, pressed the button, and instantly reassured himself as to the method. He simply thought in a very special and peculiar way—the way Quarra Vee had indicated.

Tharn was flung back a few feet. The moustached mouth gaped open as he uttered a cry.

"Don't!" the android cried. "I've been trying to—"

Kelvin focused harder on his thought. Mental energy, he felt, was pouring out toward the android.

Tharn coraked, "Trying—you didn't—give me—chance—"

**A**ND THEN Tharn was lying motionless on the hot sand, staring blindly up. The seven-fingered hands twitched once and were still. The artificial life that had animated the android was gone. It would not return.

Kelvin turned his back and drew a long, shuddering breath. He was safe. He closed his mind to all thoughts but one, all problems but one.

How can I find the red-moustached man?  
He pressed the button.

\* \* \* \*

This is the way the story starts:

Quarra Vee sat in the temporal warp with his android Tharn, and made sure everything was under control.

"How do I look?" he asked.

"You'll pass," Tharn said. "Nobody will be suspicious in the era you're going to. It didn't take long to synthesize the equipment."

"Not long. Clothes—they look enough like read wool and linen, I suppose. Wrist watch, money—everything in order. Wrist watch—that's odd, isn't it? Imagine people who need machinery to tell time!"

"Don't forget the spectacles," Tharn said. Quarra Vee put them on. "Ugh. But I suppose—"

"It'll be safer. The optical properties in the lenses are a guard you may need against dangerous mental radiations. Don't take them off, or the robot may try some tricks."

"He'd better not," Quarra Vee said. "That so-and-so runaway robot! What's he up to, anyway, I wonder? He always was a malcontent, but at least he knew his place. I'm sorry I ever had him made. No telling what he'll do, loose in a semi-prehistoric world, if we don't catch him and bring him home."

"He's in that horomancy booth," Tharn said, leaning out of the time-warp. "Just arrived. You'll have to catch him by surprise. And you'll need your wits about you, too. Try not to go off into any more of those deep-thought compulsions you've been having. They could be dangerous. That robot will use some of his tricks if he gets the chance. I don't know what powers he's developed by himself, but I do know he's an expert at hypnosis and memory erasure already. If you aren't careful he'll snap your memory-track and substitute a false brain-pattern. Keep those glasses on. If anything should go wrong, I'll use the rehabilitation ray on you, eh?" And he held up a small rod-like projector.

Quarra Vee nodded.

"Don't worry. I'll be back before you know it. I have an appointment with that Sirian to finish our game this evening."

It was an appointment he never kept.

Quarra Vee stepped out of the temporal warp and strolled along the boardwalk toward the booth. The clothing he wore felt tight, uncomfortable, rough. He wriggled a little in it. The booth stood before him now, with its painted sign.

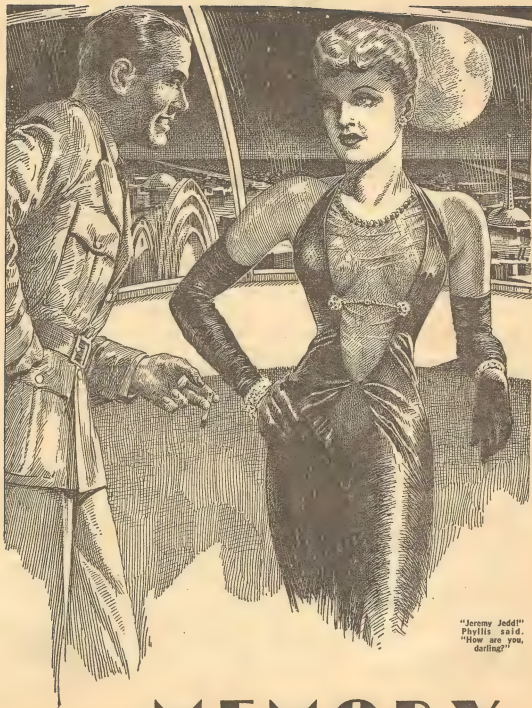
He pushed aside the canvas curtain and something—a carelessly hung rope—swung down at his face, knocking the horn-rimmed glasses askew. Simultaneously a vivid bluish light blazed into his unprotected eyes. He felt a curious, sharp sensation of disorientation, a shifting motion that almost instantly was gone.

The robot said, "You are James Kelvin."

ENTER

## YESTERDAY'S DOORS

in the novelet by ARTHUR J. BURKS coming next issue!



"Jeremy Jedd!"  
Phyllis said.  
"How are you,  
darling?"

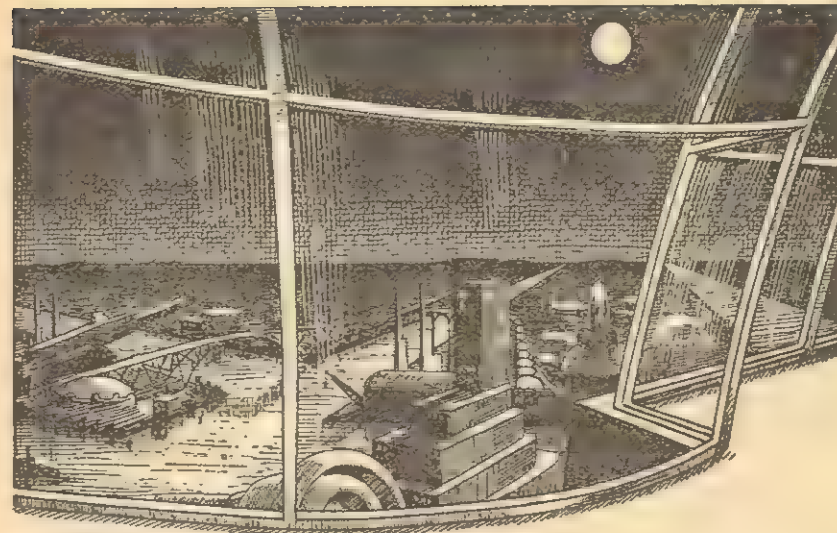
# MEMORY





"Jeremy Jedd!"  
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# MEMORY



## A NOVELET

*Jeremy Jedd receives a message from Mars and cannot decode it without help—but the only person who can help is an agent of the enemy!*

### CHAPTER I

#### *Trouble on Mars*

**J**EREMY JEDD stood in the igneous dust of the spaceport margin, staring into the sky and shading his eyes with his arm. Occasionally he checked the time by his ristkron, shaking it to make sure it was wound, craning back toward the hunched Customs House and the great clock. The sign there announced placidly that the *Pin-nacle* had reported, was overdue, and would discharge passengers at Gate Three.

Jeremy shook his head and took the letter from Mars out of his pocket again. Slowly he unfolded it and read, in the manner of a man checking his mnemonics. He was cer-

tainly familiar enough with it, after so much re-reading. The letter said:

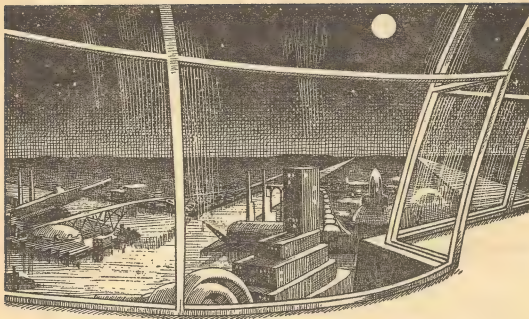
You must have heard by this time that General Export has installed a fabricating plant here, just outside Fort Wargod. It cost them plenty in time and money to get it set up—actually most of it was shipped as hand luggage because of the shipping space situation.

Like a lot of other people, I thought it was a foolish move, because the finished piping they could have shipped in the space is at such a premium on Mars, and because their plant is going to require power—a hard thing to get here. I didn't worry too much, though. Why should we care what our competitors do with their money?

But here's the joker. In spite of the fact that the plant is small and comparatively crude, it will fabricate pipe. And the material is plastic, chum, and they can now ship it in sheets! I don't have to tell you what that means to us. We only got our cargo-space contracts from General Export be-

By **THEODORE STURGEON**





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cause the Government okayed our shipping system—nesting the smaller diameters of pipe inside the larger ones. Genex's own pipe is shipped that way now, too. The idea isn't patentable.

So unless we find a patentable way to ship pipe in less space, finished, than Genex is taking for their sheet-stock, we're done, brother—wiped out. Genex means to get everything in the Colonial System—you know that. They have all the ships now, and most of the goods and services. I'm afraid we're going on the long list of small operators who have tried to buck them."

Jeremy lowered the letter and rubbed his eyes again. They ached. Since he had received it a week ago, he hadn't slept much. Supplying pipe for the Mars project was work enough without these long nights in the laboratory trying to figure a way out of this spot. Everything he and Hal had in the world was in this deal. They had worked together ever since they left school, right up until the time Hal went up to handle the Mars end.

Fervently he wished it were the other way around. If Hal were here, he'd dope out something. He had always been the real brains of Jedd & Jedd. And as a matter of fact, Hal already had doped out something. What an irony! Whatever his process or system was, he couldn't write it or wire it. General Export carried the mails too, and if they wanted to find something out, it would be only too easy.

**J**EREMY looked up again. There was a growing, gleaming dot in the sky. He glanced at the building. Near it, men were manning the heatproof launch. He turned back to the letter, to read the cryptic part about Phyllis Exeter:

I know a way to whip this, bud. I'm not telling you about it in a letter—you know why. I'm hoping and praying that you'll figure it out yourself. The new hauling contracts are coming up, and priorities for shipping space go to the pipe company that can pack the most in. My process is very simple, really. It's nothing that Budgie couldn't have told you. You have three weeks to figure it out after you get this note, and don't forget it takes ten days to file a patent application.

And in connection with this idea, Phyllis Exeter is due to arrive on the *Pinnacle*. I'd like you to meet her when the rocket-ship docks. She really has what it takes. I got quite chummy with her while she was out here in Thor City. She'll probably have a lot to say about it. She'll have a lot to say, period. She talks more than Budgie. Be good, little man.

Jeremy's brows matted together as he folded the note and put it away. There was

more than met the eye in those last two paragraphs—much more. He got some of it. "Be good, little man." And the references to Budgie—he wasn't too sure, but he had the idea they weren't in there for the purpose of using up ink. And the specific mention of Phyllis Exeter and her arrival. Now, *that* was something.

If Hal wanted to be absolutely positive Phyllis Exeter would see him, he'd sure picked the right way. Just that line in the letter would be enough to have Phyllis hunt him up anywhere on Earth, even if he hid. General Export carried the mails. But why Phyllis? After all, Hal and Phyllis had been—He shrugged. If Hal wanted to throw them together again, all right. He began to get the old, familiar feeling, just thinking about it.

From overhead came the blow-torch susurrus of the *Pinnacle's* braking and hovering jets. Down she came on her bed of fire, until she hesitated at five thousand feet. He distinctly heard the sudden shift to cold-jets, and in another minute the dust-cloud was piled up to receive her.

Jeremy stepped into the waiting room of Number Three Gate, just avoiding the sudden angry gusts of dust-laden air. He shouldered past the chattering crowd inside and got to a port, which was covered with a disc of transparent plastic whirling at high speed to afford clear vision through the mucky dust which hurtled so violently about the building. From the spaceport central, the little heatproof drifted toward the grounding liner, waiting its chance to settle on the huge hull and sink its extensible airlock into the monster like an ovipositor.

Fifteen minutes later the heatproof whickered slowly down to the roof of the gate building. The crowd pressed toward the elevators and was shunted back by the page-boys and officials. Jeremy stood on the fringes, trying to look indifferent and doing a very poor job of it.

The first load came down. A heavy-set man with a dark, rocky face. A quick, slender, cold-eyed man. These two stood aside and let a woman with two children and an aged couple pass them. And then Phyllis stepped out.

He wondered again, looking at her, what a man would have to do to ruffle that sleekness, to crumple the brilliant mask she seemed to wear. Throw a kiss or a fist in that face, and there would be little differ-

ence. Her hair was soft, and iridescent green, now. She smoked with a long holder, and the smoke matched her hair. Her voice was as lustrous, as colorful as ever, when she saw him.

"Jeremy!" she said. "Jeremy Jedd! How are you, darling?"

"Don't call me darling," he said.

"Oh, these people won't think anything of me that they don't think already," she said.

"They might think it of me," he said grimly. He took her arm, while she laughed as if trying to find out whether she could. She could.

"Come on," he said. "I need a drink. Before, I just wanted one."

She hung back and pouted. "You seem quite sure I'll come."

"You've been reading my mail!" he quipped grimly. She stopped hanging back. They moved toward the door and down the short path to the Customs House. Jeremy glanced back. The two men he had noticed at the elevators were following them. He gestured slightly with his head. "Yours?"

She shrugged. "Oh, you know how it is."

"No," he said, "I don't. Not altogether. But I'll learn the rest of it."

SHE laughed again, and hugged his elbow close to her body. "Jeremy," she said cozily, "do you still feel the same way about me?"

He glanced down into her wide gray-green eyes. "Yup. Always will, I guess. Worse luck."

"Worse luck?"

"It gets in my hair," he grumbled. "When I think of all the time I've spent thinking about you when I could've been making pipe—"

"That's what I like about you," she flashed. "You make a person feel so welcome." She released his arm. "What makes you think you can treat me like that?"

"Several things. They all add up to the fact that you won't walk away from me until you find out what you think I know about stowing pipe. No matter what I say or do to you, you'll tag right along."

"All right," she said, in quite a new, matter-of-fact voice. "I'd just as soon play that way then. All the cards face up, and such sordidness. It could have been pleasant, too."

"Not with me. Not with you and me."

"That's what I meant."

Inside the building they turned to the right elevator bank and dropped to the cafeteria two levels below. There was no conversation in the elevator due to the silent presence of the two men who had followed them from the gatehouse. Jeremy glared at them, but the younger man refused to catch his eye and stared at the ceiling, whistling softly. The other man gazed at Phyllis's feet.

"I think," Jeremy said, as they emerged, "that you have hired these pugs just to bolster your ego. You'll have men following you whatever you have to do."

"It isn't necessary to hire them for that," she said coldly. "I'm sorry you find this unpleasant, Jeremy. But please don't make it any more so than you have to. Strangely enough, there are lots of places I'd rather be than with you. Alone, for example."

"You know," he said, as he politely pulled out a chair for her, "I like you like this. I mean, I could if I tried. This is the first time I have ever seen you when you weren't swinging the figurative female lasso round and round."

"Compliments from you are more unpleasant than anything else could be. Light the menu, will you?"

He touched the stud that illuminated the menu screen. She studied it for a moment, and then dialed the code numbers of the items she wanted. Jeremy studied her as she did so.

She was an amazing girl, he admitted grudgingly. How she looked, what she did, what she was—amazing. Her smooth brow was crinkled a bit now, between the eyes. She used to look like that in college once in a while. It generally signified that she was out of her depth, and it also meant that she was about to do something about it, like flapping her eyelids at a vulnerable professor, or cribbing from someone else's paper.

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## CHAPTER II

### *Bulldozer Treatment*

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**F**ROWNING, Jeremy studied Phyllis for several minutes more. Then he spoke.

"Tell me something," he said. "Exactly how was this thing supposed to go?"

"I don't know what you mean."

His voice tuned itself to his strained patience. "I mean, what was supposed to

happen here? You would meet me at the gate, or you would hunt me up, and then what?"

"You seem to know everything. Answer your own questions."

"All right. You were going to overcome my time-honored distaste of you and give me the business—most likely the remorse angle. The time you pulled that factory-lease out from under us for the benefit of a cosmetic factory—and General Export, who were starting in the pipe business—you are sorry about that. The time Hal fell for Dolly Hollison and you told her so many lies about him that she up and married somebody else—you're sorry about that too. The time you—" His voice got thick—"accepted my ring, all of my grand old 'forgive and forget' attitude, and a third of our company stock, only to turn the stock over to Genex and tell me to go fly it—that was an awful misunderstanding!"

"You know, Phyl, if I had known when I gave you the stock that Hal had phoned up the stock certificate, I'd have killed him, I think. He took the chance. Felt that if you were on the up-and-up he could straighten out the stock later. If you weren't—well, nothing would be lost but a little peace of mind. Mine." He breathed very deeply, once. "Anyhow, Hal thinks you're poison, and I think you're poison, and I don't know what in the universe you think you are, but certainly it isn't anything that will get a new pipe-stowage process out of me."

"You really slug when you start, don't you?" she whispered. He had never seen her eyes so big, nor her face so white. "And you don't mind lowering your sights, to mix a metaphor."

"I adjust to the most obvious target," he said bluntly. "Why don't you get sore? Why don't you leave?"

Slowly, with a small, tragic smile, she rose. "Watch," she said.

She turned toward the door. At a far table, a man rose and sauntered toward the exist. Behind Jeremy, there was a scraping of chairs on the glossy flooring, and the two men who had followed her from the ship went past.

The man at the door, a suave-looking individual, lean and white-templed, folded his arms and leaned against the wall just out of range of the photocell which opened the door. When Phyllis drew abreast he spoke softly to her. She stopped and shook her head. He

smiled then, and shook his. She bit her lip, lowered her head a little and moved toward the door again. So smoothly that it did not seem swift at all, he blocked her.

The other two men reached them, greeted her effusively, took an arm each and led her back toward their table, talking and laughing. When they neared Jeremy's place, they released her and went back to their own table, leaving her standing alone, staring at Jeremy with angry and terrified eyes. The whole thing was done so smoothly that no occupant of the restaurant seemed to notice.

"I have just seen something very lovely," said Jeremy happily. "A pushing-around with you involved, where you are getting pushed for a change. Now come and sit down and tell me all about it in a sisterly fashion."

She came. Again he was struck with the difference in her, the air of being out of her depth. She sank into her chair, her eyes averted from his. She put her hands tight together on the table, but they would not stop shaking. She volunteered nothing.

He reached over the centerpiece of the table and opened the cold-chamber on her side, removing the drink she had ordered. Pushing it across to her, he said gently:

"Gulp some of that and for once in your life give me a straight story. Whose side are you on besides your own? How did it happen? And why do these dawn-men take such an interest in leaving you alone, providing it's with me?"

"Everything's gone wrong. You—you know too much, Jeremy. And you don't know enough. All right, I'll tell you. Telling you won't help me—I mean, you won't help me, no matter what. I thought I could get what I wanted out of you without your ever knowing that they—that I—"

"That they have the heat on you," supplemented Jeremy. "Source, Genex. Temperature, high." He shook his head wonderingly. "That's always been the trouble with you, Phyl. So self-sufficient. Never asked anyone for help in your life. There was always a way out, generally paved with somebody's face. I gather that Genex is as wise to you as I am."

SHE nodded, with a submissiveness which wrung something within him. His hand went out toward her. He drew it back without touching her.

He said, "Talk, now."

"I was doing all right," she said in a low



voice. "I pulled lots of—of deals for General Export. They want everything. They want the entire Colonial trade—ships, supplies, personnel, everything. They're getting it, too, any and every way they can. They'll have Mars when they're through."

"Then what? They're still under government authority."

"Oh, it's long-range, Jeremy. You remember your history. There's a colonial phase, after discovery and exploration. Colonizing is a job in itself—development doesn't really set in for quite a while. Nowadays, of course, the whole process is enormously speeded up. You know the potentialities of Mars. Uranium, iron, diamond-coal and drugs. Why, it's an unlimited opportunity for whoever controls it. For perhaps two generations, Mars will look to Earth for government and guidance. But then there will be patriots, Jeremy. Earth will find herself with a competitor instead of a dominion. And the way that competitor will be run will gradually swing the direction of control the other way—or else. Genex isn't out after a world. Genex wants two worlds—the system—the galaxy, if you like. But it will be for Genex and its heirs; it won't be for the little guy."

Jeremy sat back and stared at her, amazed. "You figured all that out yourself? I can't believe it. No, by heaven, I don't believe it. Whom are you quoting?"

"Hal Jedd," she said with an effort.

"Well, well, well!" He took out Hal's letter and opened it. Her eyes darted to it, to his face, and down again. "Don't play," Jeremy said grimly. "I know you've seen this. You and every stooge Genex could put on it." He glanced through the letter, speared a sentence with his finger, and read aloud: "'Phyllis Exeter due. I got quite chummy with her while she was out here in Thor City.'"

"That's what put me in this spot," she said with sudden bitterness. "Yes, I saw him. Lots. The word got around that he had developed something radical in the line of pipe stowage. He has a suitcase-size lab back of his office, you know. Well, I was put on it."

"You volunteered—isn't that more like it? You said, 'Let me at the sucker. I've been able to wind him and his dopey brother around my finger since we were kids; and besides, I have a little score to settle. They're one up on me.' That right?"

She almost laughed. "I didn't call him a

sucker," she said faintly. She took a swallow of her drink. "Take care of the steak, will you, Jeremy? I'm hungry."

Jeremy took the raw steak out of the cold compartment. It was tenderized and seasoned. He slid it into the induction-heater.

"How do you like it?" he asked.

"Seared and rare," she answered.

He adjusted the controls and closed the drawer, while she continued.

"I saw a lot of Hal. He got under my skin, Jeremy. Not anything about him personally—I don't go for his type. These scholarly boys leave me cold. I like big men with blond hair, strong enough to smack a gal down when she deserves it, or even to keep their hands off her. And maybe with a little cleft in a square jaw—"

Unconsciously fingering just such a concavity on his chin, Jeremy threw back his blond head and snapped, "Baloney to you and your shopping lists! Go on with the yarn. What did get under your skin?"

"What he had to say about Genex. I don't know—maybe I never bothered to take it apart before. Maybe my paychecks and bonuses kept me from thinking. Whatever it was that happened, it happened so gradually that I didn't notice it. But the things he said about long-range thinking—well, here I was on the inside and knowing even more about what went with Genex than he did. The more I looked at it, the less I liked it. Maybe I should have left Hal alone. Maybe I should have tuned him out while he talked. But, as I said before, he had me before I knew what was happening."

**J**EREMY smiled. "Hal's like that. He has a theory that a quiet voice in a noisy room is louder than a shout. He thinks quietly and loud that way too." The centerpiece chimed softly and the drawer slid out. Jeremy took the plate-tongs from the rack and lifted the steak and its perfectly cooked side-dishes over to Phyllis.

"Thanks. Well, I met a boy at Fort War-god. A blue-eyed innocent of a cadet. Maybe it was moonlight. Moonlight's twice as tricky on Mars, you know. Maybe it's because I'm a little crazy, and can't resist trying things out on people. Well, this kid needed to be impressed worse than anyone I ever met. Before I knew it we were on the parapet looking at Earth, hanging out there so bright and blue, and I was spilling all this stuff about colonies, dominions, and the pa-

triotism of the second-generation Martian. Loose talk. Really, I don't know how much of it I believed myself."

She shook herself suddenly, all over, as if trying to wriggle out of something tight and hot. Pulling herself together with an effort, she cut into her steak busily.

"Well," she said after she had swallowed the first bite, "my blue-eyed babe in the woods turned out to be a Genex man, put there for the specific purpose of finding out where my indoctrination stood."

Jeremy roared with laughter, a great cruel burst of it. He cut it off instantly and leaned forward. "So it happened to you," he said viciously. "I'm mighty glad to hear it. Some sweet and gentle character made you open up your heart, did he? Tell me something, slicker—did you try to give him some of your company's stock?"

This hit home. In sudden anger she stopped eating and cursed Jeremy. Then all at once, she smiled and shrugged. It was an odd little gesture, and the resignation in it made that something within him flinch again. Phyllis had tried so hard, for so long, to cover up that soft, lost part of her. She had succeeded so well, until now. She was such a magnificent product of her own determinations, and it hurt him to see such a product spoiled, even though he hated everything it represented. So he said, "I'm sorry," and to his surprise, the words tasted good in his mouth.

"So here I am," she said in a low voice. "I failed with Hal, as I should have expected. I got quite a carpeting for it, and for that business with the cadet. And then Hal wrote that letter. Genex carries the mails. Every big brain in the place, and a lot of little ones, has been racking over it ever since. And they put me on to you. This is supposed to be my last chance—my double or nothing play. If I get that process from you, I get back where I was. On probation, of course, but I'll string along with Genex. If I fail, I'm done. Outside of Genex there isn't much doing, and I don't doubt that I'm pretty thoroughly blacklisted."

"You are," he said flatly. "I get the score now. These plugs around here are supposed to keep you with me until you get the info. Hmm. Suppose I leave?"

"I go with you. I keep after you, I catch up with you some way, I keep trying."

"How long is this supposed to go on?"

"Until I get the process. Or until Genex

gets the pipe hauling contract from the Government. In which case I'm automatically out."

"Suppose you quit trying?"

"Then I'm out, as of that moment."

"In other words, your fate is in my hands, to corn a phrase."

"I guess it is, Jeremy." And to his utter astonishment, she began to cry with her mouth open. For such an accomplished actress, she did it very badly indeed. Her heart was in it.

Jeremy sat back and watched her, his brain racing. Hal's letter had taken on a few new meanings, but not enough. "Be good, little man." The rest of that old routine was "And if you can't be good, be careful." Well, maybe he could have been more careful, but Phyllis seemed to have responded well enough to the bulldozer treatment. Jeremy knew what was the matter with her. She was scared. She had lived by her not inconsiderable wits for a long time, and the clear picture of the end of the line she was facing was a frightening one.

But what about the process? Now it was up to Jeremy to figure it out!

### CHAPTER III

#### *Plastic Compact*

**H**AL had done his astute best to explain the process to Jeremy Jedd in that letter. Somewhere in that letter, somewhere in the odd fact of Phyllis's being here—in these three places were components of the process.

She was quieter now.

"Sorry," she sniffled. "I'm in a bad way, I guess. Do you know why I was crying? It was because you didn't get up and leave when I told you all this. You will help me, Jeremy? You will?"

"Help you? How can I?"

"Tell me the process." She leaned closer, excitedly. "Or tell me something almost as good as your process, but better than what Genex has."

"You're very flattering." She really thought he had the process, then. Be good, little man. He'd have to be. But good. "I gather Genex has set up a welding plant on Mars. Why are they worried?"

"Power," she answered. "There are only two power-piles on Mars, and they're worked to the limit. They're so heavy, with the shielding and all. Shipping space is so scarce, with foodstuffs, development equipment and so on, that piles aren't set up until they are absolutely essential. Power is rationed, and it is costing Genex a fortune for the piddling amount they need to process sheet stock into pipe. Their advantage, of course, is to procure the space for themselves and get rid of one more independent outfit."

"Uh-huh. The fight is really over a much bigger thing than pipe. *Hmm*. And the outfit that finds a way to ship pipe in less space than sheetstock, gets the contract and for once has a solid footing against the corporation's expansion."

"But how can you do it, Jeremy? How can you possibly ship pipe in less space than stacks of plastic sheet?"

He smiled. "You really think I'll tell you, don't you? I have no reason to trust you. You have thrown yourself on my mercy, more or less, and given me the choice of saving your skin—your career, anyway—I suppose you call it that—at the risk of having you hand the process to Genex and not only kill off Jedd and Jedd but also kill the brightest chance in fifty years of checking the monopoly. Nope. I'm telling you nothing." I wish someone would tell me, he added to himself.

"But you still stick around," she said thoughtfully. "You met me at the spaceport, you don't throw me to the wolves when you have a chance, you—why, you don't know the process yourself!"

"On the contrary. I'm just sitting here cruelly amusing myself. I've waited years to see you crawl."

"I'm not going to listen to you," she said tightly. "I think I'm right. The only thing I can do is to help you to figure it out. That letter. You. Me. The process is right here at this table, if we can only find out how to put it together."

"This is going to be very entertaining," said Jeremy, far more jovially than he felt. How could this girl, who in the long run operated so stupidly, be so incredibly sharp in detail? "Where would you start?"

"With the letter," she said promptly. She closed her eyes and her lips moved. It dawned on him that she had thoroughly memorized the letter. She opened her eyes wide and asked, "Who is Budgie?"

"A childhood companion," he said, a little taken aback.

"That's a lie. Every fairly close associate you have ever had in your life has been checked."

Jeremy's mouth slowly opened. Then he brought a hand crashing down on the table and bellowed with laughter.

"Do you mean to tell me," he gasped, "that Genex's investigators have been gravely looking through lists of my schoolmates, cousins, bartenders and dates looking for *Budgie*?"

"We—they tried everything," she said, and added, "Stop that silly cackling. Who was it?"

He held up an irritating forefinger. "Ah-ah! Manners, now. Let us act like ladies and gentlemen, chicken, or I send you to the salt mines."

"I'm sorry," she said angrily. He set his mouth. "I'm sorry," she said with a great deal more sincerity.

"Better," he said. "Now then, I don't think it'll hurt to tell you. Budgie was a parakeet we used to have. He was around very nearly twenty years. We gave him a fine funeral."

**T**HE girl stared at him, her eyes glittering with disbelief.

"And yet, according to that letter, the process is nothing Budgie couldn't have told you. Jeremy, I don't believe you. Who was Budgie?"

"So help me, the only Budgie I ever knew was that bird. He swore like a soybean farmer in a urea factory, he did. We called him Budgie because he was a budgerigar, or, to you, a Zebra Parakeet. A budgerigar is the talkingest bird that ever lived."

"What?" she said in disgust. "A creature with memory and no brains could tell you what the process is?" Jeremy started, and she asked, "What's the matter? Have a rush of brains to the head?"

While he fumbled for an answer, she leaned back with narrowed eyes. "I came awfully close to it that time, didn't I? Come clean, Jeremy. You've known about the process ever since you were a kid, now, haven't you?"

"You've got it," he mumbled. She's got it? Who's got what? He clapped his hand to his head. "Memory without brains. That's me."

They stared at each other. "If only I knew

a little more about plastics," she breathed. "Or even about your brother. I'll bet if I knew as much about the way Hal's mind works as you do, I could sit right down and write that process out."

Jeremy stared at her and knew she told the truth. His was a quick mind as well as an encyclopedic one, but she was his master at quick intuitive reasoning. A wild plan flitted through his mind—to leap up and rush out, to draw an attack from one of the Genex men who waited patiently for Phyllis to do her work; to prefer charges against the corporation, perhaps. But he rejected it instantly.

They were too clever for that. They would let him go. One of their plastics engineers would work with Phyllis until some hunch she had gotten made sense to him. Then what? Well, either he would figure it out in time or he wouldn't. If not, he was sunk. If so, Genex would so radically underbid his pipe to drive him out that he would be sunk anyway.

"Hal!" The name slipped from his lips, so profound was his sudden wish for his brother. Hal could set him straight with a word, if only he could send the word.

"Me too," whispered Phyllis. "If only I could see Hal once, only for a minute, I'll bet I could—" Suddenly she dived into her handbag, clawing out a pot-pourri of feminine conglomerata. "Where is it? Where is—oh—here." She held a rectangular piece of plastic in her hand. It was blue, smooth, heavy.

"What's that?"

"Just a compact. A lighter. A torch. One of those things. But Hal gave it to me. And I'm just mystic enough to think it'll help me think. He had his hands on it. Didn't you know that all women—even modern women—are witches?" She closed her eyes, clutching the compact, frowning in concentration.

Staring at her, Jeremy frowned too, and thought harder than ever in his life before. Something about memory without brains. Something—and then a line in the letter swam before his mind's eye.

I'd like you to meet her when the rocket-ship docks. She really has what it takes.

"Give me that," he spat, and snatched it roughly out of her grasp. Instinctively, she reached for it. He batted her hand out of the way, hard. She sat on the edge of her chair, her nostrils dilated, rubbing her hand and watching him like a cat.

He turned it over and over, shook it, smelled it, felt it. He opened it, shook out the tinted powders, cracked the mirror retainer with his thumb and slid the glass out. There was nothing unusual about the compact. A little expensive, perhaps, but not unique at all. There was no trademark.

"Where did Hal get this?"

"He didn't say. Bought it, perhaps. Maybe he made it. He has a little outfit. Give it back to me!"

"I will not." Jeremy fell to studying it again.

"Jereee," she said sweetly.

HE looked up. She was her old self. She was erect and beautiful and the color was back in her cheeks. Somewhere in a side corner of his mind, he deeply regretted the fact that he admired her so much. She put out her hand. "Give."

"Nope."

She glanced around. "It's evidence. I've been robbed. The property was forcibly taken from me by that man, officer," she said, mimicking a sweet, wronged young thing. "There we were, sitting peacefully over a drink and a snack, when he went berserk and took it away from me and began tearing it apart." Her face went cold and direct again. "Would you tell the nice policeman exactly *why* you wanted to keep it, Jeremy?"

"Not while Genex and the police get along so nicely," he said grudgingly. "Okay. I'm open to compromise. You don't know the significance of this piece of plastic. You just might be wrong. If Genex's plastics division can't find out anything about it, you're away out of luck."

"Oh," she said. She glanced around at the Genex watchdogs and shivered. "What's your proposition?"

"I have to find out something more. Just what, I'm not sure. Now think carefully. Exactly what do you remember Hal's saying about this compact?"

"Why, he never said anything, much. Just some philosophical quip about women, about me and plastics. I don't remember it exactly."

"Try."

"It was—it was something like this." She paused, and he knew she was running over and over it in her mind, poking and prodding at it for hidden meanings. Finally she shrugged, and quoted, "I like giving



you plastics, Phyl. Plastics are an analogical approach to women, and some of 'em come pretty close. Some day maybe we'll all be familiar with a plastic that will react differently under the same stimulus, the way you do. Laughter this time, tears the next, whichever seems to be expected.' I didn't think it was very flattering."

Jeremy stared at her, comprehension sparking, flaming, coruscating in his brain. He said hoarsely:

"Give me the compact. I've got to get it to a lab."

"No," she said firmly. She took it out of his unwilling hands. "Frankly, I don't know what you've figured out. But I will, if I kick it around long enough. If I can't, I know those who can. Well," she purred, arching her body, "I'd better run along, Jerry darling. Thank you so much for everything."

The hand that closed on her wrist seemed to be made of beryl steel. "Don't you move," Jeremy said. He said it in a way which kept her from moving. "You can't take that chance. You don't know enough. If you take that away, I'll never know either, and I'd see both of us dead first. I'll make a bargain. Once more. I must make a test on that compact. I can do it right here. Let me do it. You can watch. Whatever happens, your description will be enough for a plastics engineer. It will give us both a break. And if there really is a secret there, you'll have a chance of getting what you want. You'll *know*. You don't know now—you only guess."

It was a long time before she nodded her head.

When she did, he took the compact and, with his knife, scraped off a shaving and dropped it into the ash tray. He took a plate-handler from the warm rack and touched the shaving. Then he put his cigarette to it. Then he held it with the plate-handler and held it in the flame of his cigarette lighter. Part of it burned. He sniffed the smoke, nodded, and set the temperature regulator on the induction heater.

He dropped the compact in and closed the drawer.

"No!" she shouted. "You're burning it! You've got the process, and you're destroying it so I won't have a chance!" She lunged for the drawer. He caught her wrists, transferred them both to one of his powerful hands, and shook his head.

"Sit tight," he snapped.

THE centerpiece chimed, and the drawer popped open. Their heads cracked together painfully as they bent to look inside. Neither noticed the pain.

In the bottom of the pan lay a twisted piece of blue plastic. It spread almost all the way across the roomy drawer. It was flat, and followed a series of regular convolutions. It dawned on both of them at the same moment what it was.

Script.

As if the plastic itself were the track of a writing-brush, it spelled the two words:

#### I REMEMBER

"That's for me," breathed Phyllis. "And I'm a dope. The memory without brains—even I know about that phenomenon. Now that I see it done, I remember a demonstration in school, where a cube was compression-molded into a spool-shape. When it was heated again, it slumped together and formed the original cube. A little sloppy, but a cube nevertheless. With a little refinement, I don't see why extruded pipe shouldn't be compression-molded into rods, bricks, or book-ends and still come out pipe when it's heated. Beats sheet-stock welding a mile. Jeremy, my boy, you may have my melted-up old compact with my blessings. You may frame it and hang it over your lab bench when you come to work for Genex, as you must or starve. 'I remember.' I like that."

"You don't remember how badly you needed help, Phyllis," he said hoarsely. "My help."

"Plastics and women, my boy. Remember?" She rose like a queen, gathered up her belongings and drifted doorward, beckoning imperiously to the watchdogs. Ignoring Jeremy Jedd completely, they followed her out.

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## CHAPTER IV

### *Surprise for Genex*

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ABRUPTLY Jeremy came to his senses with an inarticulate, animal noise and raced to the door. The lithe man with white hair at his temples stepped in front of him.

"Want something, chum?" he asked softly.

Jeremy raised a hand to sweep the man

aside but his eye fell on what the man was holding in his hand. It was a rectangular leatherette needle case. Jeremy had seen them before. A touch of the case, a little pressure on a stud, and you were needled. And the variety of hypos used was peculiarly horrible.

They stood there, frozen, for a long instant. Then someone passed.

A spaceport guard.

"Guard!" Jeremy rapped, leaping backward. "This man's threatening me. Needle!"

The guard bobbed a remarkable Adam's apple at them and then strode toward the white templed man.

"Give it here, bud."

The man smiled, raised the case, snapped it open and extracted a cigarette. "A joke, guard. Perfectly harmless."

"Ha-ha!" said the guard with his mouth only. He clicked his lips shut and looked at Jeremy with one eyebrow raised. "You sure are jumpy, Blondy," he remarked, and strode off.

Jeremy controlled himself with a prodigious effort and swung on the older man. "Listen, you—"

The man blew smoke at Jeremy. "Better cool down, son," he said kindly. "We joke often, but not always. *Hold it!*" he snapped, watching Jeremy's darkening face. "You can butter me up and down these walls, but I'm only one of a couple of thousand that you'd have to whip afterward. Better go on back now and have another drink." And before Jeremy could move so much as a lip, the man was striding up the corridor in that way which did not seem to be swift.

Balked, frustrated, furious, Jeremy stood for a while and then turned back into the restaurant. He slouched back to his table, kicked the chair out and dropped into it. He could use that plastic memory stunt to stow pipe. Sure. And when he thought of the low bid that Genex would put up against him, his stomach turned over.

He glowered into the heater drawer, where the blue plastic script told him placidly what he would never forget:

#### I REMEMBER

And then he thought of Hal's words to Phyllis.

\* \* \* \* \*

The demonstrations supporting registered bids were made in a public hearing, in the vast offices of the Shipping Space Priority

Board. The Space Commissioner, an oldster with a snowy lion's mane and the eyes of an eight-year-old child, had his wattles in his palms and his elbows on his desk. He was flanked by the featureless protocolloids of his well-peopled bureau.

In the wide area before him were three groups of people, each hovering over a tangle of apparatus. Behind them were the rows of seats for the interested public, one third of the seats occupied. The second demonstration was in progress. The first demonstrator and his helpers were dismantling their bulky machine—part brake, part automatic welder, it had produced several hundred feet of inch-and-a-half pipe out of a long and compact bale of sheet stock.

The galleries had regarded the performance as quite impressive, whether or not they knew that Winfield and Shock, who presented the process, was a General Export affiliate, brought in to establish a figment of competition.

General Export's management had shrewdly chosen a presentable demonstrator. She was slender, poised, clear-eyed, clear-voiced, and her hair was green. She was saying:

"—and in spite of the question of simultaneous patent application, General Export will offer this pipe at a lower price per unit shipped than any competitor could conceivably meet, due to a secret treatment of the original plastic."

"Due to the secret mistreatment of competition," growled a man in the gallery, who had once owned a space-line.

**T**HE demonstrator walked gracefully to a stack of long, slender plastic rods beside her machine and lifted one. "Mr. Commissioner, this rod is twelve feet long and one sixteenth of an inch square. As you will observe, the rod is extremely flexible. Stowage of these rods will therefore be compact and economical, since rectangular holds are not necessary. Bundles of these rods will follow the curves, if any, of the retaining bulkheads, and therefore use every cubic inch of space economically. I shall now demonstrate the creation of usable seamless pipe from these rods."

She stepped over to her machine, slid the rod in at one end, and threw a lever. "This is a very simple heater. On Earth or Mars, particularly on Mars, it may be adequately

operated by sun-mirrors, thereby tapping no local power-source."

There was a faint hiss. A small motor whined, and a twelve-foot length of pipe shot out with a dry clatter. She repeated the performance twice more and then bowed respectfully to the Commissioner, who said:

"Thank you very much, Miss Exeter. Next!"

A clerk sang, "Mr. Jeremy Jedd, of Jedd and Jedd! Process, pipe stowage, interplanetary!"

Jeremy stood up, ran off the customary courtesies of the applicant, and then said:

"I am deeply grateful to Miss Exeter for many things. One of these is her concise and well-presented description of the advantages of General Export's plastic-memory process. She has saved me much explanation, for my process is precisely the same. The difference lies in the plastic treatment before and after the processing you see here. I will say at the start that as regards price of the rods I am demonstrating, they cost at least five times as much as those shown by Miss Exeter. I am, apparently, drastically underbid."

Jeremy had to pause then to duck under the wave of comment that swept over the huge room. The Commissioner cleared his throat and raised a forefinger without moving his hand from his chin. A clerk raised a gavel without moving anything but his arm, and brought it down with a crash.

"Get on with it," growled the Commissioner. His tone said, If you can't compete with the other bids, you idiot, why waste my time, or even that of these thousand-odd other people?

Jeremy stepped to his machine, which was almost a duplicate of the one Phyllis Exeter had used, and lifted an end of one of his rods. He did not attempt to lift it all at once; apparently it was quite heavy.

What followed was the same as the previous showing, with one noticeable exception; the pipe came out in a twenty-foot length. Again the room buzzed. This time Jeremy held up his hand. "The greater length of the pipe is an advantage over these other methods, but not the greatest," he said calmly. He threw the heater-control over again—

Without loading in another rod!

A twenty-foot length of pipe joined its predecessor.

Again he pulled the control, and again. Each time a twenty-foot pipe was produced, until six of them lay side by side on the floor.

The air above them shimmered very slightly. They were uniform and perfect.

"Mr. Commissioner, I ask that space for shipment of pipe to Mars be allotted to my company because the stowage is as compact as any product on the market, because I can ship approximately nine point three times as much pipe per cube unit as my nearest competitor, and because I can deliver pipe per unit length at eleven per cent cheaper than anyone else on earth! And that in spite of the apparently prohibitively low bid of Miss Exeter's most altruistic firm. Thank you, gentlemen."

"Just a minute, young man!" said the Commissioner. "You have a most remarkable process. I—ah—hear comments to the effect that the pipe was concealed in the machine. Can you give some layman's explanation of this extraordinary effect?"

**J**EREMY smiled as he glanced at the machine in front of him.

"Certainly, sir. My company, you may remember, secured a portion of the space allotted to pipe shipments during your last session, by devising the present method of nesting the smaller diameters of pipe inside the larger ones—a method which was not patentable, which my competitors were slow to discover, but quick to copy.

"In the present case, I very much fear that they have repeated their lack of—if I may say it—logical thoroughness. You see, my pipe is still nested, one inside the other, six taking the space of one, and the whole compressed into the rods you see here."

"You nest pipe of the same diameter?" said the Commissioner incredulously; and that odd, mad, detached part of Jeremy's mind noticed hilariously that the oldest's bright eyes blinked with repressed anger.

"Yes sir, I do, in effect. But it is a question of density. The inner pipe is a condensed plastic—a patented process, by the way. This plastic, while undergoing the "memorizing" phenomenon so beautifully explained by Miss Exeter, restores its original density as well as its original form. The inner pipe, then, is simply condensed more than the one which surrounds it, and so on until the six are nested. Then the whole is compression, molded into rods of precisely the dimensions of those admirably compact ones produced by General Export.

"Now, when heat treated, the outer pipe returns to its original form and is automati-

cally ejected from the machine. It has, of course, pre-heated the next pipe, which pre-heats the one after. It takes, actually, far less heat per unit length to restore my pipe than it does to restore the pipe of—ah—any of my competitors. A small advantage, however, and merely hair-splitting under the circumstances."

"I feel you deserve many congratulations, Mr. Jedd. Purely as a matter of personal interest, might I ask how you came to discover such a remarkable effect?"

"Indeed you may, Mr. Commissioner. The process was developed by my brother on Mars. He enlisted the courtesy and kindness of a messenger to send me a sample. It was in the form of a compact—a lady's compact—and when heat treated it separated into a plastic sheet which formed in script the words 'I remember.'"

Jeremy grinned broadly. "It was some time before I realized that there was anything more to be learned from the sample, for the words covered the rest of it. When I put this—this message into my pocket, I saw the rest of the plastic and, guided by a hint in a rather cryptic verbal message concerning women and plastics, I again treated the sample. I got more script. It read, 'Density Two.' Then I knew what he was driving at. I treated it again and got 'Density Three' and still again and got"—he smiled—"a length of pipe. After that it was little trouble for me to analyze the plastic and develop the condensing treatment—I beg your pardon, I think somebody had better get Miss Exeter a glass of water." . . .

They met that evening, and perhaps it was by accident. She was standing in the shadow near his apartment building when he came home from the lab.

"Jerry?"

"Phyllis! I—I'm sorry."

"Sorry? That's what you say when you realize you did a wrong. I don't think you mean that. Isn't it more a kind of—pity?"

He did not deny it. He said, "What can I do for you?"

"I—I need a job now."

He took her hand and drew her into the pale light. Her hand lay in his like something asleep. "I couldn't give you a job, Phyl."

"Yes, I know, I know. I have never been—faithful. Jerry, I haven't been faithful to myself."

"I don't understand. You've always—"

"Always thought I could take 'em or leave 'em alone. Not so, Jeremy."

"Oh," he said. "Oh, that." He squeezed her hand a little. "Your hands are soft. Maybe that's part of the trouble, Phyl."

"I think I know what you mean. There are jobs for me, but—"

"—not jobs for your wit or your wits."

"I see. I think I can—get there, Jerry."

"I know you can. Good-by, Phyllis."

"Good-by, Jeremy."

There is one job which centuries of human progress has not done away with. No one has developed a self-washing window. When one of mankind's monuments to himself reaches a thousand feet into the air, and its windows must be washed, that washing is a job for a rare type of human. He must be strong, steady, and brave. He must live, away from his job, in ways which do not unfit him for it.

Jeremy was glad when he heard Phyllis was doing this work. He knew then what he had always guessed—that some day she would "get there." He knew it in his heart.



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Captain Williams saw the woman, embedded in the crystal pillar, change into a statue of gold



# THE EARTH MEN

by Ray Bradbury

When Captain Williams and crew land on Mars they expect the keys to the Planet—but they're locked up instead!

**W**HOEVER was knocking at the door didn't want to stop.

Mrs. K. threw the door open.

"Well?"

"You speak *English*!" The man standing there was astounded.

"I speak what I speak," she said.

"It's wonderful *English*!" The man was in uniform. There were three men with him, in a great hurry, all smiling, all dirty.

"What do you want?" demanded Mrs. K.

"You are a *Martian*!" The man smiled. "The word's not familiar to you, certainly. It's an Earth expression." He nodded at his

men. "We are from Earth. I'm Captain Williams. We've landed on Mars within the hour. Here we are, the first men to reach Mars in a rocket. And *you* are the first Martian we've met!"

"Martian?" Her eyebrows went up.

"What I mean to say is, you live on the fourth planet from the sun. Correct?"

"Elementary," she snapped, eying them.

"And we—." He pressed his chubby pink hand on his chest—are from Earth. Right, men?"

"Right, sir!" A chorus.

"This is the planet Tyr,," she said, "if you want to use the proper name."

"Tyr, Tyr." The man laughed exhaustedly. "What a *fine* name! But, my good woman, how is it you speak such perfect English?"

"I'm not speaking, I'm thinking," she said. "Telepathy! Good day." And she slammed the door.

A moment later there was that dreadful man knocking again.

She whipped the door open. "What now?" she wondered.

The man was still there, trying to smile, looking bewildered. He put out his hands. "I don't think you *understand*—"

"What?" she snapped.

The man gazed at her in surprise. "We're from *Earth*!"

"I haven't time," she said. "I've a lot of cooking today and there's cleaning and sewing and all. You evidently wish to see Mr. K, he's upstairs in his study."

"Yes," said the Earth man, confusedly, blinking. "By all means, let us see Mr. K."

"He's busy." And she slammed the door again.

This time the knock on the door was most impudently loud.

"See here!" cried the man when the door was thrust open again. He jumped in as if to surprise her. "This is no way to treat visitors!"

"All over my clean floor!" she cried, "Mud! Get out. If you come in my house, wash your boots first."

**T**HE MAN looked in dismay at his muddy boots. "This," he said, "is no time for trivialities. I think," he said. "We should be celebrating." He looked at her for a long time, as if looking might make her understand.

"If you've made my buns fall in the oven," she exclaimed, "I'll hit you with a piece of wood!" She peered into a little hot oven. She came back, red, steamy faced. Her eyes were sharp yellow, her skin was soft brown, she was thin and quick as an insect. Her voice was metallic and sharp. "Wait here. I'll see if I can let you have a moment with Mr. K." She blinked her yellow eyes at them. "What was your business?"

The man swore luridly as if she'd hit his hand with a hammer. "Tell him we're from Earth and it's never been done before!"

"*What* hasn't?" She put her brown hand up. "Never mind. I'll be back. Be quiet."

The sound of her feet fluttered through the stone house.

Outside, the immense blue Martian sky was hot and still as a warm deep sea water. The Martian desert lay broiling like an prehistoric mudpot, waves of heat rising and shimmering. There was a small rocket ship reclining upon a hill top nearby. Large footprints came from the rocket to the door of this stone house.

Now there was the sound of voices quarrelling upstairs. The men inside the door stared at one another, shifting on their boots, twiddling their fingers and holding onto their hip belts. A man's voice shouted upstairs. The woman's voice replied. After fifteen minutes the Earth men began walking in and out the kitchen door, with nothing to-do.

"Cigarette?" said one of the men.

Somebody got out a pack and they lit up. They puffed slow streams of pale white smoke. They adjusted their uniforms, fixed their collars. The voices upstairs continued to mutter and chant. The leader of the men looked at his watch.

"Fifteen minutes," he said. He looked around the room. "I wonder what they're up to, up there?" They went and looked out the windows.

"Hot day," said one of the men.

"Yeah," said somebody else in the slow warm time of early afternoon. The voices had faded to a murmur and were now silent. There was not a sound in the house. All the men could hear was their own breathing.

An hour of silence passed. "I hope we didn't cause any trouble," said the leader. He went and peered into the living room. Mrs. K was there, watering some flowers that grew in the center of the room.

"I *knew* I had forgot something," she said,

when she saw the leader. She walked out to the kitchen. "I'm sorry." She handed him a slip of paper. "Mr. K is much too busy." She turned to her cooking. "Any way it's not Mr. K you want to see; it's Mr. T. Take that paper over to the next farm, by the blue canal, and Mr. T'll advise you about what ever it is you want to know."

"We don't want to know anything," observed the leader, patiently, pouting out his thick lips. "We already *know* it."

"You have the paper, what more do you want?" she asked him, straight off. And she would say no more.

"Well," said the leader, reluctant to go. He stood as if waiting for something. He looked like a child staring at an empty Christmas tree. "Well," he said again. "Come on, men."

The four men stepped out into the hot silent day.

A half hour later, Mr. T was sitting in his library sipping a cool drink when he heard the voices outside, in the stone causeway. He leaned over the edge of a window and looked at the four uniformed men who looked up at him.

"Are you Mr. T?" they called.

"I am."

"Mr. K sent us over to see you!" shouted the leader.

"Why did he do that?" called Mr. T.

"He was busy!"

"Well, that's a shame," said Mr. T. sarcastically. "Does he think I have nothing else to do but entertain people he's too busy to bother with?"

"That's not the important thing, sir," shouted the leader.

"It isn't? Well, it is to me. I have much reading to do and Mr. K is inconsiderate. This is not the first time he has been this thoughtless of me. Stop waving your hands, sir, until I finish talking. And pay attention. People usually listen to me when I talk. And you'll listen courteously or I won't talk at all."

**U**NEASILY the four men in the court shifted and opened their mouths, and once their leader, the veins on his face bulging out, had a few little tears in his eyes.

"Now," said Mr. T. "Do you really think it is fair for Mr. K to be so careless and ill-mannered? Do you?"

The four men looked up through the heat

of the day. Their leader said, "We're from *Earth!*"

"I think it was very ungentlemanly of him to treat me this way," brooded Mr. T.

"A *rocket* ship. We came in it. Over there!"

"It's not the first time K's been unreasonable, you know."

"All the way from Earth."

"Why, for half a mind, I'd call him up and tell him off!"

"Just the four of us, myself and these three men, my crew."

"I'll call him up, yes, that's what I'll do!"

"Earth. Rocket. Men. Trip. Space."

"Call him up and give him a good lashing!" cried Mr. T. He vanished from the window and for a minute there were angry voices back and forth over some weird mechanism or other. Below, in the yard, the captain and his crew gazed longingly back at their pretty rocket ship lying on the hill side, so sweet and lovely and fine.

Mr. T re-appeared in the window, wildly triumphant. "Challenged him to a duel, by the gods! A duel!"

"Mr T—" The captain started all over again, quietly.

"I'll shoot him dead, do you hear!"

"Mr. T, I'd like to *tell* you."

"Don't interrupt!" T. glowered at the Earth man. "You aren't very courteous yourself. I'm busy, doing research, this is no time for you to come waving notes from a fool like Mr. K."

"We came twenty million miles." The captain sweated.

Mr. T looked at the captain for the first time. "Where'd you say you're from?"

The captain flashed a white smile. Aside to his men he whispered. "*Now* we're getting some place!" To Mr. T he called, "We've traveled twenty million miles. From Earth!"

Mr. T yawned. "That's only *nineteen* million miles." He picked up a terrible looking weapon. "Well, I have to be going now. Just take that silly note, though I don't know what good it'll do you, and go over that hill into the little town of Iopr and tell Mr. L all about it. *He's* the man you want to see. Not Mr. K, he's an idiot, and I'm going to kill him. Not me, because you're not in my line of work."

"Line of work, line of work!" bleated the captain. "Do you have to be in a certain line of work to welcome Earth men!"

"Don't be ridiculous, everyone knows *that*," Mr. T. rushed down the stairs. "Go see Mr. L, he'll help you with your trouble. Good-by."

And Mr. T. went down the causeway like a pair of calipers running.

The four men stood, shocked. Finally, their leader said, "We'll go into town. We'll find someone yet who'll listen to us."

"Maybe we should go out and come in again," said one of the men in a hot thick, dreary voice. "Maybe we should take off and land again. Give them time to organize a party."

"That might be a good idea," murmured the tired captain.

The little town was full of people going in and out doors and saying hello to one another. Through windows you could see people eating food and washing dishes.

The four men, wet from their long walk, stopped and asked a little girl where Mr. L's house was.

"There." The child pointed.

The captain got eagerly, carefully down on one knee and looked into her sweet young face. "Little girl, I want to talk to you."

He seated her comfortably on his knee and he folded her small brown hands neatly into his own big ones, as if he were ready for a bedtime story and he was shaping it up in his mind, very slowly and with a great patience and happiness in details.

"Well, here's how it is, little girl. We are from the planet Earth and we came in a great big rocket ship. You should just see it once, it's *tremendous*! It makes a noise like I don't know what and we came all the way from Earth in it. . . ."

**T**HE LITTLE girl looked off at the horizon. She disengaged one of her hands without thinking about it; and reached into the pocket of the loose fitting robe she was wearing and pulled out a toy. She dropped it unconcernedly to the ground while the captain talked on. The toy was a mechanical spider and it climbed back up her knee, obediently, while she watched it coolly, while the captain shook her gently and urged his story upon her.

"We're from Earth," said the captain. "Do you believe me?"

"Yes," said the little girl glancing at the way she was wiggling her toes in the dust.

"Fine." The captain pinched her arm, a

little bit with joviality, a little bit with meanness to get her to look at him. "We came in a great big tremendous rocket ship. Do you believe *that*, now?"

The little girl stuck her finger in her nose and dug around in it. "Yes."

"And—take your finger out of your nose, little girl—I am the captain, and—"

"Never before in history has anybody come across space in a rocket," recited the little creature, eyes shut.

"Wonderful! How did you know?"

"Oh, telepathy." She wiped a casual finger on her knee.

"Well, aren't you just *ever* so excited?" cried the captain. "Aren't you glad?"

"You just better go see Mr. L right away." She dropped her toy on the ground, slipped off his knee and said, "Mr. L will like talking to you." She ran off, with the toy following obediently after.

The captain squatted there looking after her with his hand out. His eyes were loose and watery in his head. He looked at his hands. They were empty. His mouth hung open, showing his white teeth. The other three men stood with their shadows under them. They spat on the stone street. . . .

Mr. L answered the door. He was on his way to a lecture, but he had a minute, if they hurried inside and told him what they desired.

"A little attention," said the captain, red-eyed and tired. "We're from Earth, we have a rocket, there are four of us in the crew. We're exhausted, we're hungry, we'd like a place to sleep. We'd like someone to give us the key to the city or something like that, and we'd like somebody to shake our hands and say 'Hooray' and say 'Congratulations, old man!' That about sums it up."

Mr. L was a tall vaporous thin man with thick blind glass lenses over his yellowish eyes. He bent over a desk and brooded over some papers, glancing now and again with extreme penetration at his visitors.

"Well, I haven't the forms with me, here, I don't *think*." He rummaged through the desk drawers. "Now, where *did* I put the forms?" He mused. "Somewhere. Somewhere." He murmured under his breath. "Oh, *here* we are! Now!" He handed the papers over crisply. "You'll have to sign these papers, of course."

"Do we have to go through all this rigamarole?"

Mr. L gave him a thick, glassy look. "You say you're from Earth, don't you? Well, then, there's nothing for it but for you to sign."

The captain wrote his name. "Do you want my friends to sign, also?"

Mr. L looked at the captain, looked at the three others and burst into a shout of derision. "Them sign! Ho! How marvelous! Them, oh, *them*, sign!" Tears sprang out of his eyes. He slapped his knees and bent down to let his laughter jerk out of his gaping mouth. He held himself up with the desk. "*Them* sign!"

The four men scowled. "What's funny?"

"Them sign!" sighed Mr. L weak with hilarity. "So very funny. I'll have to tell Mr. X about this!" He held the paper in one hand which shook as he laughed. He examined the paper minutely with a magnifying glass.

"Everything seems to be in order." He nodded. "Even the agreement for euthanasia, if final decision on such a step is necessary." He chuckled again.

"Agreement for *what*?"

"Don't talk. I have something for you. Here. Take this key."

The captain flushed. "It's a great honor."

"Not the key to the city, you fool," cracked Mr. L. "Just a key to the House. Go down that corridor, unlock the big door and go inside and shut the door tight. You can spend the night there. In the morning, I'll send Mr. X to see you."

**D**UBIOUSLY the captain took the key in hand. He stood looking at the floor. His men did not move. They seemed to be emptied of all their blood and their electric fire. They were drained dry.

"What is it, what's wrong?" inquired Mr. L. "What are you waiting for, what do you want?" He came over and peered up into their faces, stooping. "Out with it, you!"

"I don't suppose you could even—" suggested the captain, "I mean, that is, try to, or think about, I mean . . ." He hesitated. "We've worked hard and maybe you could just shake our hands and say 'Well done!' do you—think?" His voice faded.

Mr. L stuck out his hand stiffly. "Congratulations!" He smiled a false smile. "Congratulations!" He turned away. "I must be going now. Use that key."

Without noticing them again, as if they had melted down through the floor, Mr. L moved about the room packing a little manuscript case with papers. He was in the room another five minutes but never again did he address the solemn quartette that stood with their heads down, their heavy legs sagging. The light dwindled from their eyes. Their faces were bleached of all warm color. When Mr. L went out the door he was busy looking at his fingernails. . . .

They straggled along the corridor in the dull silent afternoon light. They came to a large burnished silver door and the silver key opened it. They entered and shut the door and turned.

They were in a vast, sunlighted hall. Men and women sat at tables and stood in conversing groups. At the sound of the door they regarded the four uniformed men.

One man came forward, bowing. "I am Mr. U," he said.

"And I am Captain Jonathan Williams, of New York City, on Earth," said the captain without emphasis.

Immediately, the hall exploded!

The rafters trembled with shouts and cries. The people, moving forward, waved and shrieked happily, knocking down tables. They swarmed around and seized onto the four men and lifted them swiftly up to their shoulders and tramped around the hall carrying them six times in all about the room, jumping, bounding, singing!

The captain and his men were so stunned that they rode the toppling shoulders for a full minute before they began to laugh and shout:

"Hey! This is more *like* it! This is the life! Boy! Yay! Hey! Yow! Whoopee!" They winked tremendously at one another and flung up their hands to clap the air. "Hey!"

"Hooray!" said the crowd.

They put the four men on a table. The shouting died out:

The captain twinkled his eyes at everybody. "Thank you." He almost broke into tears. "It's good, it's good."

"Tell us about yourselves," suggested Mr. U.

The captain cleared his throat.

The audience *ohhed* and *ahhed* as the captain talked. He introduced his crew, each made a small speech and was embarrassed at the thunderous applause.



Mr. U clapped the captain's shoulder. "It's good to see another man from Earth. I am from Earth, also."

The captain stepped back. "How was that again?"

"There are many of us here from Earth," said Mr. U.

"You? From Earth?" The captain stared. "But is it possible? Did you come by rocket? Has space travel been going on for years?" His voice was disappointed. "What, what state are you from?"

"Tuiereol. I came by the spirit of my body, years ago."

"Tuiereol." The captain mouthed the word. "I don't know that city? What's this about spirit of body?"

"And Miss R, over here, she's from Earth, too, *aren't* you, Miss R?"

Miss R. nodded and laughed strangely, her yellow eyes flashing.

"And so is Mr. W and Mr. Q and Mr. A and Miss J!"

"And I'm from Jupiter," said one man, preening himself.

"I'm from Saturn," said another, eyes glinting slyly.

"Jupiter, Saturn," murmured the captain, squinting at the hall.

**I**T was very quiet now; the people stood around and sat at the tables which were strangely empty for banquet tables. Their yellow eyes were shining, and there were long shadows under their cheek-bones. The captain noticed for the first time that there were no windows, the light seem to permeate the walls. There was only one door. The captain winced. "This is so confusing. Where on earth is this Tuiereol you mention? Is it in America?"

"What is America?" asked the man.

"You never heard of America? Well, what about Europe or Asia?"

"What are they?"

"But you say you're from Earth! And yet you don't know!"

Mr. U drew himself up angrily. "I am from Earth. Earth is a place of seas and nothing but seas. There is no land."

"Wait a minute." The captain rose half way to meet him, then sat back. He looked at Mr. U's yellow eyes shining and he saw the brown skin. "You look like a regular Martian," said the captain. He snapped a glance at Miss R. "You say you're from

Earth, too?"

"Yes," said Miss R. proudly. "Earth is a place of all jungle. I am from Orri, on Earth. It is a civilization built of silver!"

Her eyes were fixed upon him, her lips trembled and twitched. Now the captain turned his head from her and then to Mr. U and then to Mr. W and Mr. I and Mr. O and Mr. G and Mr. H. And he saw their yellow eyes waxing and waning in the light, shining and waiting, focusing and unfocusing. The captain put his heavy head down into his hands and began to shiver. He was sick to his stomach. Finally he lifted his head and regarded his men, somberly.

"Do you realize what this is?" he asked of them.

"What, sir?" they wanted to know.

"This is no celebration," said the captain, haggardly. "This is no welcome. This is no banquet. These are not Government representatives. This is no surprise party. Look around. Look at these people. Look at their eyes. Listen to their voices."

The three men stood in the silent crowd. Nobody breathed. There was only the soft white movement of eyes in the close room.

"Now I understand." The captain's voice was far away. "Why every one gave us notes and passed us on, one from the other, until we met Mr. L." He looked at the vast room. "Do you know where we are?" He waved his hands, helplessly. "They've sent us down a corridor with a key to open a door and shut the door. And here we are."

"Where are we, sir?"

The captain exhaled. "In an insane asylum." . . .

It was night. The large hall lay quiet and dimly illumined by hidden light sources in transparent walls. The four men sat around a wooden table, their bleak heads bent in together over their whisperm. On the floors, men and women lay huddled, some of them sleeping. There were little stirs in the dark corners, little movements of solitary men or women sitting alone, gesturing their hands.

The whispering at the table went on and on. Every half hour one of the captain's men padded silently to the silver door, tried the key in it, shook his head, and returned to the table.

"Nothing doing, sir," he'd whisper. "We're locked in, proper."

One of the men stared at his hands. "An insane asylum. I can't believe it."

"They think we're really insane, sir?"

"Quite. That's why there was no hulla-baloo to welcome us. They merely tolerated what, to them, must be a constantly recurring psychotic condition." He gestured at the sleeping dark shapes in uneven rows and patterns. "Paranoids, all of them. What a welcome they gave us! For a moment there—" The captain looked regretful. A little fire rose and died in his eyes. "For a moment there I thought we were getting our true reception. All the yelling and singing and speeches. It was pretty nice, wasn't it—while it lasted? Pretty nice."

"Will they keep us in here, sir?"

"Yes."

"For how long?"

"Until we prove we're not psychotics."

"That should be easy enough, sir."

"I *hope* so."

"You don't sound very certain, sir."

"I'm not. Look over in that corner."

A MAN squatted in the corner. Out of his mouth issued a blue flame which turned into the round shape of a small, naked woman. It flourished on the air, softly, in vapors of blue light, whispering and sighing.

The captain nodded at another corner where a woman stood, changing from time to time. First she was imbedded in a pillar of crystal, then she altered into a golden statue, finally a staff of polished cedar, and back to a woman. All through the dark hall people were juggling thin blue flames, shifting, changing, for night time was the time of change and affliction.

"Magicians, sorcerers," one of the captain's men said, in awe.

"No, hallucination," said the captain.

"They pass their insanity over into us so that we see their hallucinations, too."

"But *how*, sir?"

"Telepathy. Auto-suggestion and telepathy."

"Is that what's worrying you, sir?"

"Yes. If hallucinations can appear this 'real' to an observer, to us, to anyone, if hallucinations are catching and almost believable, it's no wonder they took us for psychotics. If that man can produce little blue fire women over in his corner, and that woman over there can melt a pillar, how natural for the normal Martians to think *we* produced our rocket ship with *our* minds."

"Oh," said his men, in the shadows.

Around them, in the vast hall, the fires were sputtering and the figures were moving. Flames leaped blue, flared, evaporated. Little demons of red sand ran between the teeth of sleeping men. Women became oily snakes. There was a smell of reptiles and animals.

The earth men sat at their little wooden table all through the night, whispering and shaking their heads, their faces pallid, their hands again and again lighting new cigarettes, eyes watching the silver door.

In the morning, everybody stood around looking fresh, happy, and normal. There were no flames or demons in the room. The captain and his men, on the contrary, had blue depressions under their eyes and their beards had grown out. They stood by the silver door hoping it would open.

Mr. X arrived after about four hours. They had a suspicion that he had been outside the door peering in at them for at least three hours before he stepped in and beckoned them, and led them to his small office.

"Be seated," He was a jovial, smiling man, evidently a psychiatrist. "What seems to be the trouble?"

"You think we're insane, and we're not." The captain was very calm now.

"On the contrary, I do not think *all* of you are insane," said the psychiatrist. He pointed a little wand at the captain. "No. Just *you*, sir. The others—are secondary hallucinations."

The captain slapped his knee. "So *that's* it! That's why Mr. L laughed when I suggested that my men sign the papers, too!"

"Eh? Oh, yes. Mr. L told me." The psychiatrist laughed. "A good joke. Where was I? Secondary hallucinations, yes. Women come to me with snakes crawling from their ears, and when I cure them the snakes just vanish."

"Well, we'll be glad to be cured," said the captain, smiling. "Go right ahead."

The psychiatrist seemed surprised. "Unusual. Not many people *want* to be cured. The cure, you know, is drastic."

"Cure ahead! I'm confident you'll find we're all sane."

"Let me see your papers. I must be sure they are all in order for a cure." The psychiatrist checked his file. "Yes. All signed." He shut the file. "You know, such cases as yours are incurable. The people in that hall are simpler cases. But once you've gone this

far, with primary, secondary, auditory, olfactory and labial hallucinations, as well as tactile and optical fantasies, it is pretty bad business. We have to resort to euthanasia."

The captain leaped up with a roar. "Look here now, we've stood quite enough! Test us, tap our knees with rubber hammers, check our hearts, exercise us, ask questions!"

"You are free to speak," said the psychiatrist.

**T**HE CAPTAIN raved on for an hour. The psychiatrist listened. "Incredible. Most detailed dream fantasy I've ever heard. You're *really* a case."

"Dad bust it, we'll show you the rocket ship!" screamed the captain, his eyes wild and red, his lips burning with oaths. "Come on!"

"I'd like to see it. Can you manifest it in this room?"

"Oh, sure. It's in that cigar box on your desk!"

Mr. X peered seriously into the cigar box. He went *"tsk"* and shut the lid solemnly. "Why did you tell me to look in there? The rocket isn't there."

"Of course not, you hopeless fool! I was joking! Does an insane man joke?"

"You find some startling senses of humor. Now, take me to your rocket. I want to see it." . . .

It was noon. The day was very hot when they reached the rocket. "So." The psychiatrist walked up to the ship and tapped it. It gonged softly. "May I go inside?" he asked, slyly.

"You may."

Mr. X stepped in and was gone for a long time.

"Of all the silly exasperating things." The captain chewed a cigar as he waited. "For two cents I'd go back home and tell people not to bother with Mars. What a suspicious bunch of louts."

"I gather that a good number of their population are insane, sir. That seems to be their main reason for doubting."

"I suppose. Nevertheless, this is all so damned irritating."

The psychiatrist emerged from the ship after half an hour of prowling about, tapping, listening, smelling, looking.

"*Hmm*," he said, rocking on his toes. "Well." And he shut his eyes and held to the end of his nose. "Yes."

"Now do you believe!" shouted the captain as if he were deaf.

The psychiatrist looked him up and across. "Most amazing. My dear gentleman. This is the most incredible example of sensual hallucination and hypnotic suggestion that I have ever encountered. I went through your 'rocket,' as you call it." He tapped the hull.

"I feel it. Tactile hallucination." He drew a breath. "I smell it. Olfactory hallucination induced by telepathy and hypnosis." He went over and kissed the ship. "I taste it. Labial hallucination." He kicked the ship. "I hear it. Auditory fantasy!"

He shook the captain's hand. "May I congratulate you? You are a psychotic genius! You have done a most complete job! The task of projecting your psychotic image life into the mind of another via telepathy and keep the hallucinations from becoming weak sensually is almost impossible. Those people in the House usually concentrate on visuals, or, at the most, visuals and auditory fantasies. You, have balanced the whole conglomeration! Your insanity is most complete!"

"My insanity!" The captain was pale.

"Yes, yes, what a beautiful insanity. Metal, rubber, gravitizers, foods, clothing, fuel, weapons, ladders, nuts, bolts, spoons. Ten thousand separate items I checked on your boat. Never have I seen such a complex. There were even *shadows* under bunks and the smallest item! Such concentration of will! And everything no matter how or when tested, had a smell, a solidity, a taste, a sound. Let me shake your hand again!"

His eyelids flickered. "I'll write this up. It'll be my greatest monograph. I'll speak of it at the Martian Academy next month! Look at you! Why, you've even changed your eye color from yellow to blue, your skin to pink from brown. And those clothes, and your hands having five fingers instead of six! Biological metamorphosis through psychological imbalance! And your three friends, unstable wraiths, all of them!"

He took out a little gun. "Incurable, of course. You poor man. You will be happier dead. Have you any last words?"

"Stop, for God's sake! Don't shoot!"

"A deity fixation, also, is it? You poor sad creature. I shall put you out of this misery which has driven you to imagine the rocket and your three men. It will be most engrossing to watch your friends and your

rocket vanish once I have killed you. I will write a little paper on the dissolution of neurotic images from what I perceive here today."

"I'm from Earth. My name is Jonathan Williams, and these—"

"Yes, I know," soothed Mr. X and fired the gun.

**I**NSTANTLY the captain fell with a bullet in his heart. The other three men screamed.

Mr. X stared at them. "You continue to exist. This is superb! Hallucinations with time and space persistence!" He pointed the gun at them. "Well, I'll scare you into dissolving!"

"No!" cried the three men.

"An auditory appeal, even with the patient dead," mused Mr. X as he shot the three men down.

They lay on the sand, intact, not moving. He kicked them. Then he rapped on the ship. "*It persists! They persist!*" He fired his gun again and again at the bodies. Then he stood back.

Slowly, the little psychiatrist's face changed. His jaw sagged. The gun dropped from his fingers. His eyes were dull and

vacant. He put his hands up and turned in a blind circle. He fumbled at the bodies, saliva filling his mouth.

"Hallucinations," he murmured frantically. "Taste. Sight. Smell. Sound. Feeling." He waved his hands. His eyes bulged. His mouth began to give off a faint little froth. His nose twitched.

"Go away!" he shouted at the bodies. "Go away!" he screamed at the ship. He examined his trembling hands. "Contaminated," he whispered wildly. "Carried over into me. Telepathy. Hypnosis. Now I'm insane. Now I'm contaminated. Hallucinations in all their sensual forms." He stopped and searched around with his numb hands for the gun. "Only one cure. Only one cure. Only one way to make them go away, vanish."

A shot rang out. Mr. X fell.

The four bodies lay in the sun. Mr. X lay where he fell.

The rocket reclined on the little sunny hill and didn't vanish.

When the town people found the rocket at sunset they wondered what it was. Nobody knew so it was sold to a junk man and hauled off to be broken up for scrap metal.

That night it rained all night. The next day was fair and warm.

## The Sun's Sub-Sonic Umbrella

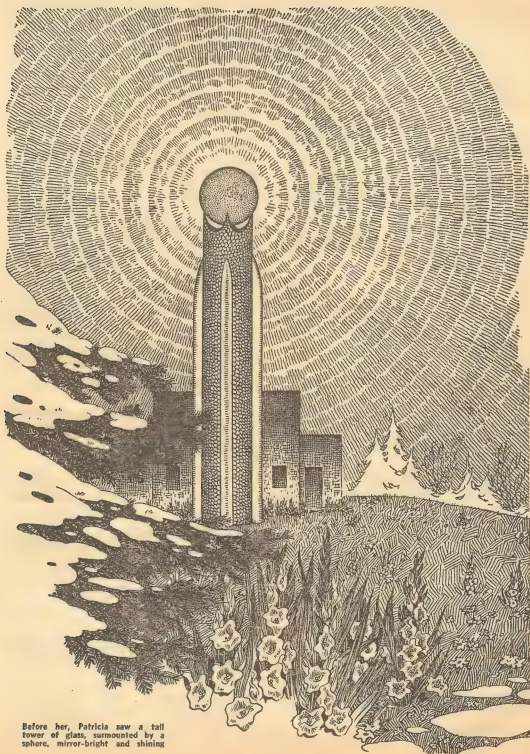


**A**CCORDING to recent theories advanced by Dr. Martin Schwarzschild of Princeton University Observatory, those folk who think that music must be loud to be hot may be making sense in more ways than they realize.

His proposition is based upon the fact that photographs of the sun taken with the aid of high-powered telescopes indicated that the outer layer of Old Sol is liberally spattered with spots of light which are, according to the best scientific minds, gas bubbles of tremendous size and extremely short duration. They are hundreds of miles in diameter and exist but a few moments at a time, covering at any given instant about ten per cent of the sun's surface.

It is believed that this constant rising of bubbles to the surface produces sub-sonic sound of the same sort (vastly magnified, of course) that is produced by ocean swells. It is generally accepted as fact that such sound has mechanical energy.

Hence, if Dr. Schwarzschild is correct, when the bubbles burst this energy is converted into heat which, continuing its rise from the surface, is responsible for keeping the corona blazing tens and hundreds of thousands of miles from the sun itself. Heretofore the ability of the corona to maintain itself in space has been rated an insoluble mystery.—Carter Sprague



Before her, Patricia saw a tall tower of glass, surmounted by a sphere, mirror-bright and shining





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decides to do things about the weather!*

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But Patricia was not driving for fun. She was driving in anger and sheer boredom.

a novelet by **WESLEY LONG**

She was sick and tired of the surroundings of her home. Another person might have liked them—and Patricia had liked them once but, like her life, they now seemed entirely too artificial. The daughter of the Governor of the State, is in a position to wonder about the honesty of those who importune her. Since she was mentally competent and physically



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attractive, she was quick to question the true, often hidden, desires of the men who sought after her.

And so now Patricia, filled with boredom, was driving too fast on a slippery road. And naturally, the inevitable happened. Patricia's car skidded on a slippery spot on the road and spun completely around twice. The car careened into the ditch, against a light fence-post, and was still.

A man, clad in a heavy overcoat, muffler, and overshoes, emerged from the woods, approached the car and opened the door. Patricia, unconscious, fell from the car seat into the man's waiting arms.

He shook her gently, rubbed her cheek with his hand, and murmured soothing words to her.

She opened her eyes and looked up at him.

"What happened?"

"You had an accident," he told her. "You should not drive so fast on slippery roads. You might get hurt."

"Am I hurt?"

"Forget it," he said, propping her back into her seat in the car. "It's been fun!"

So saying, the man leaned forward and kissed Patricia full on the lips. Then he turned and left, heading across the road into the woods, where he disappeared.

He left nothing—but the tingle of his caress.

She swore softly in a cool contralto.

**G**ETTING out of the car, she looked it over. The right front wheel was dished; the left fender was turned under against the wheel.

Furthermore, no one without a tow truck could ever set that car on the road again for driving, even after it was repaired.

Patricia kicked the wheel with a small overshoe and swore again.

Then she laughed, and in the cool air, her voice tinkled happily.

Boredom? This time she had escaped it.

From the glove compartment in the car, Patricia took a road map and spread it out over the hood. It was thirty miles to the nearest town along either way of the road. Through the woods, however, it was not far. A few miles.

It was about noon, and the air was exhilarating and Patricia was well clothed. Somehow the idea of trudging along the hard concrete of the road seemed less fun than

cutting through the woods. Getting lost didn't bother her. She wouldn't get lost. Using her nail file with sheer womanlike ability to work mechanical miracles, Patricia disconnected the little automobile compass fastened to the windshield and looked at it carefully.

"Die true, North-Northeast," she said aloud. She blew out her breath and shrugged at the little white cloud. She'd be cold by then, but not frozen.

What fun!

Deep in the woods, the snow tapered off to nothing. The ground was not damp as with freshly-melted snow, but dry. A duck pond a little farther on was clear and not a spot of ice marred its surface. Ducks floated on its surface happily, fishing.

The trees about her here were budding ever so slightly and the grassy forest floor was truly showing the verdant green that marks the coming of spring.

But it was still Mid-March and the awakening of spring not due for a full six weeks in this climate.

Patricia continued on. Tiny leaves were visible here, and a still further along there was the full-leaved tree, blossoming flower, and heavy grass of full summer.

And then before her she saw a tall tower of girder and glass, surmounted by a three foot sphere of mirror-shining metal. A comfortable brick building stood near the tower and there were a few other smaller buildings handy. She stood there, wondering about all this, and definitely connecting the summery appearance of the place with the tower, for waves of warmth came from the shining metal sphere on top. She knew because she could feel the warmth of her face as she looked up at it.

"Summery, isn't it?" came a wry voice.

Patricia gasped. A tall man stood behind her with a crooked smile on his face. A Doberman stood beside him, regarding Patricia with mingled suspicion and patience.

"I—was—"

"Blind," replied the man without humor. "These signs are printed in a fair grade of legible type in a good semantic form. They make no exceptions for personable young ladies, regardless of their desirability."

"Don't be insulting," snapped Patricia.

"I'd by a four-star liar if I told you that you weren't personable and desirable," he told her acidly. "You may be blind, but I am not."

"I'll leave your land at once," she answered in tart tones. "I saw no signs."

"I know." He grinned. "Your car skidded into the one you should have seen."

**P**ATRICIA bent a cold gaze upon him. "You've been following me?"

"Yes. And if you hadn't stumbled on this, you'd have gone on through without seeing anybody."

"What is the secret?" she demanded.

"It's obvious, isn't it?" he told her.

"Seems to me that any secret project should have guards and a fence.

"I can't afford either."

"But—" faltered Patricia, waving a hand vaguely at the tower and the forest.

"But—"

"You've stumbled onto something that I'd have much preferred to keep secret, Miss Morris."

"You know me?" she gasped.

"No. Just connected the license-plate listing with the girl driving it."

"And," she said loftily, "is your name as secret as this—project?"

He grinned at her again. "Don't be snippy. For one thing, you didn't think my name important enough to ask, and for another thing, you're the trespasser, not I."

"Well?"

"In an earlier era," he said with a smile, "a man could hurl a trespasser into a donjon keep. Or set the dog on the trespasser. I'm James Tennis, Miss Morris. And I'd not turn Doby here on you because I'd hate to see you trying to outrun a doberman on those high-heeled overshoes. Instead, I'll invite you in for a spot of hot tea, after which I'll drive you to someplace where you can arrange for transportation home."

"For which I'll thank you, Mr. Tennis. And this—"

"This is my own project," he said. "And it is not perfected and tested yet. I'll explain, but you must swear secrecy."

"That, I promise," she said with a lift of her head.

He walked beside her toward the larger of the brick buildings. She noted with interest that he stood a full seven inches taller than she, and that he seemed more than sure of himself.

The house itself was neat but lacking in the frills and gadgets of a real home. It was starkly utilitarian and obviously womanless. Heavy drapes of the kind that require little

attention hung over the windows and in other ways the place had the appearance of a house where only the scantiest attention had been paid to those details which a woman considers important.

Tennis led Patricia into the kitchen and set a kettle of water to boiling on an electric stove of modern design.

Then he turned from the stove and conducted her back into the living room. Here, he showed her a small metal case about eight-by-eight-by-ten inches. Atop the case was a tall glass insulator surmounted by a shining sphere. A standard line cord ran from the case. Tennis plugged it into the wall socket and snapped the single switch on the case.

"This is an effect I uncovered during some experiments," he explained. "I know no more about it than I did two months ago when I first discovered it. But—"

**H**E TOOK her wrist and held her hand near the sphere.

Warmth flowed from the sphere and Patricia nodded.

"A smaller example of the larger one out there?"

"This is the first one. That one is the second. It was set in operation along about the middle of January. It seems to be doing fine."

Patricia looked out at the green woods. "That it does," she said.

"This thing," he told her, "develops about the same thermal output as a fifteen-hundred-watt electric heater with an input of about twenty-five watts."

"It sounds as though you should be able to make a large fortune," observed Patricia.

"It does," he agreed. "But I'm inclined to wait until I'm certain of what the devil is going on. It might be dangerous."

"Why?"

"Energy must come from somewhere," he said. "The problem is where. Until I'm sure that nothing dangerous will take place, I'm not inclined to release it."

"You seem to have something that might well change the earth," she said.

"I'd like to be certain that the change will be all to the good," he answered with a laugh. Then he trotted to the kitchen to take care of the tea kettle, which was beginning to make high-pitched noises.

She followed him and he served her as she sat on the tall stool in his kitchen.



## CHAPTER II

*Intruders*

THE man on the road flagged the car down and climbed into the seat beside the driver as it came to a stop.

"That's her car, all right," he said.

Blackman nodded. "It is."

Howardson smiled wryly. "So what?"

"So we follow," said Blackman.

"Now look," grumbled Howardson. "No dame wrecks a car on purpose."

"Naturally."

"Then what's the use or sense in following her? We can't get nothing on her this way."

"No, but you can never tell."

"If she were heading for a lovenest or something, she wouldn't have to wreck a car to do it," said Howardson.

"I admit it. But you can't tell what will happen. For instance, why did she head through the woods instead of walking along the road. You said she headed into the woods."

"She did. Her footprints point that way. But if you'll look on the map, it's thirty miles along slippery highway in either direction before you hit a town of any size. On the other hand, it's just a few miles through the woods to Redmond. I'd head that way."

"Yeah," admitted Blackman. "And dear Patricia does like to ramble in the woods, we know. So we ramble too."

"Waste of time."

"Waste of time it may be, but we're making a living by following Patricia Morris for Hendy. And Charles Hendy pays well. He'll pay even better when we can come up with something that will get Joseph Morris a political black eye."

"That's going to be hard."

"We know it. Morris is a clever, wise man. But Patricia is a young, headstrong woman. She'll slip sooner or later and then the newspapers will take off on the entire Morris Family. So now we follow her."

Parking the car, Blackman followed the footprints through the woods. Patricia's trail was easy to follow across the snow and, like Patricia, the two men eventually came upon the edge of the cold weather and into the circle of warmth. Unlike Patricia, both men questioned this demarkation, as faint as it

was, and then they went more carefully, watching the signs of growing spring as they progressed.

"There's more to this than meets the eye," snapped Blackman. "Glad we came, now?"

"I'll let you know later," said Howardson.

Through the trees, they saw the buildings and the tall tower upon which was the shining ball.

"Now," said Howardson, "I'm glad."

"Sh-h-hh!" admonished Blackman.

Out of the door came Jim Tennis and Patricia Morris. "I have no telephone," he was saying. "So I'll have to drive you to Redmond."

"I don't mind," she returned cheerfully. "From there I'll have someone come out and collect my car."

"And as soon as they do," he told her, "I've got to replace that signpost you clipped."

"You never did tell me how you knew I was there," she said.

"That signpost contains a photo-cell unit," he explained with a smile. "Doby can almost read the signs; and he knows when the photo-beam is broken. Well, Miss Morris, I must say that I am not sorry you dropped in. Too bad you had to wreck a car to do it, though."

She faced him with a smile. "The next time," she said firmly and honestly, "I shall not wreck a car."

HE WAS a bit flustered and mumbled something unintelligible.

Patricia entered his car, saying, "There will be a next time, you know."

He laughed happily as he climbed in beside her. They drove away chatting animatedly.

Blackman turned to Howardson. "So?" he asked.

"So this may turn into something. I'm a bit scared, though."

"Why?" demanded Blackman.

"Look," said Howardson. "supposing it gets out that Patricia Morris, the Governor's daughter, is Number One girl friend of a scientist who has what it takes to create a summer resort out of a hunk of midwinter Minnesota?"

Blackman grunted. "It wouldn't do Morris's chances for re-election any harm, would it?"

"Nope."

"Unless," said Blackman slyly, "someone



else came up with it first. Someone who was a good, firm friend of Charles Hendy. Someone, perhaps who would not conceal it from the public, but would give it, freely, in the name of Charles Hendy, Public Servant."

Blackman took a vest-pocket sized camera out and made a few initial snaps. Then, with Howardson watching the road, Blackman entered both the house and the laboratory and took picture after picture of everything in sight, hoping that of the batch there would be enough dope for a clever scientist to work on.

It was a month later—about the middle of April—that Jim Tennis looked out of the laboratory window to see Patricia Morris come driving up the roadway. He went out and waved; she came to a sudden stop and smiled. Her smile was generous and neither sudden nor fleeting.

"It's warm," she said, jumping out of the coupe and shedding her fur. He stood there in shirt sleeves and smiled at her.

"Naturally it's warm here," he agreed.

"I knew it would be," she answered with a smile. "So I dressed in a summer frock. Like?"

Patricia paraded herself for him, a vision that left him trying to think of something to say that wouldn't sound idiotic.

"Elsie was frantic," Patricia went on. "Elsie's my maid and she is horrified at the idea of wearing a summer silk in April. It isn't done, doncha know," she finished, imitating.

Then she turned back to her coupe and took out a basket. "Furthermore, Joe thinks I'm crazy. Joe's that chef at the Governmental mansion and he never heard of packing a picnic basket in April. Now," she finished, "you're going to relax!"

"I am?" he blurted.

"You are. You seldom do, I bet."

"We relax," he said with a final laugh. The doberman came bounding up, and Patricia leaned back into the coupe and produced a large and juicy bone. She tossed it, and Doby watched the bone arch through the air, backed out of the way as it landed, and then flopped down with his chin on the top of the bone and looked at Jim.

Jim nodded.

Then the doberman stood up and picked the bone between his jaws. He followed them, his tail wagging furiously.

"There was a lake," said she.

There was. It was warm and pleasant by

the lake. Joe did well, too. In the basket was cold chicken, cold beer, and potato salad. The chef had also packed in a thermos full of boiling hot coffee; obviously Joe did not quite believe the girl and was taking no chances. But disbelief was discounted because they used the coffee, too.

**T**HAT it was mid-April seemed unbelievable. It was too pleasant for that early in the spring—too warm and too fragrant, though from time to time there came a cool breeze from beyond the circle warmed by the radiant heat from the machine.

And while they were lazing there by the lake, enjoying a summer day, and getting acquainted, a more strenuous activity was going on behind them. . .

Blackman had not been far behind as Patricia drove up to the roadway. The somewhat perplexed frown disappeared as her car approached Tennis's place. Then he nodded as though accepting the answer to a problem.

"What was that for?" asked Howardson.

"I couldn't quite figure out the reason for the picnic lunch, complete with cold beer and the trimmings. That dress she wore was strictly for August. I'd almost forgotten about this place—and my mind hadn't quite accepted it yet. But now it's clear. Seems to me we should thank Patricia for her aid."

Howardson grinned wolfishly. "Yeah," he drawled.

Blackman was fumbling for some equipment. He took it out and approached the signposts at the off-jut of Tennis's road from the main highway.

"When I get it set," he told Howardson, "you drive through!"

They drove up to within a few hundred yards of the place and then emerged. "Is this safe?" asked Howardson.

"Yeah. Patricia is a looker, and Patricia is gone on that goon. It'll be moonbeams and daisies as long as she's here."

Howardson nodded dubiously. "Betcha the doberman isn't in love with her."

Blackman held up an atomizer. "The doberman will enjoy this if he comes snuffing at us," he snarled.

Blackman did not try the thing, which was just as well to Howardson. Then, armed with a list of items missed before, they went to work, being very careful to displace nothing nor to leave any sign of search. The minute camera came out again and again, and How-

ardson made some sketches and took some notes. They photographed page after page of Jim's notebook.

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### CHAPTER III

#### *A Tower in the Sky*

---

**D**OWN by the shore of a warm lake, Patricia was talking to Jim Tennis.

"But suppose someone comes in here?" she asked.

"Well, this isn't strictly a military secret," Tennis replied. "After all, the best I can do is to discourage visitors. I cannot keep them out excepting by law. Furthermore, I doubt that anybody could duplicate it just by seeing the gear from the outside. As far as any further developments, no one can force me to disclose it. I've got a notice filed with the patent office on an electric heater, which I must complete by next November some time.

"People seldom come through here, and those that do set off the photoalarm and I intercept them long before they get to the warm circle. It they insist on walking through, I walk along with them chatting furiously. We eventually swerve off to one side or the other so that we bracket the circle. They come out on the opposite side having seen nothing."

"I'd hate to see you lose out after all this work," she told him. "And I can't help feeling that all this is far too loosely kept."

"It can be kept no other way," he said. "A barbed wire fence of normal size would keep no one out. If it were adequate to keep people out it would be large enough to create curiosity. And I'd have to go out and intercept them anyway."

"But am I the first to enter?" asked Patricia.

"Not at all," he replied with a smile. "Jones, who owns a farm not far this side of Redmond, was hunting for a lost dog once. He wandered into the circle before I could locate him—I started for the segment of photobeam he broke and he continued to circle—and so he knows. He also knows that it is under test and Jones is a close-mouthed character."

"Too many people aren't."

"No," he agreed. "But Jones is well read and his farming is done from a degree

in agriculture, which indicates that he understands science well enough to know that something that appears like a universal panacea on Tuesday may sprout horns on Friday and be more of a detriment than a blessing until it is well-tested."

"You've done well," said Patricia.

"Them's fine words of praise, lady," he grinned.

"I think they're deserved."

"Quick judgment."

Patricia shook her head. Then she smiled and nodded. "Yes and no," she said with a smile. "Quick judgment, based upon—"

"Upon—" he prompted.

"Jim," she said earnestly, "do you think being the Governor's daughter is a sine-cure?"

"It looks like nice work if you can get it," he laughed.

"It's a job of bending over backwards so that people won't think you're shoving too hard," she said with a trace of bitterness in her voice. Then Patricia leaned back on the picnic blanket and looked up at the sky. "That's why I like it here," she said. "Light me a cigarette, Jim, and I'll tell you something."

Jim smiled, lighted two cigarettes simultaneously, and leaning over, placed her's between her lips.

"I like it here," she said quietly, "probably because I think it is the first place I've found in years where I can take off my shoes and be comfortable."

"Why, again?" he asked, looking down at her.

"Jim, you're reasonably competent."

"I like to think so."

"When this thing is proved to your satisfaction, you know exactly what to do with it?"

"Oh—but definitely."

**P**ATRICIA blew out a cloud of smoke, directing it away from his face. She said, "I don't have to inspect everything you say and do for motives. In fact," she went on with a smile, rising on one elbow, an act that brought their faces very close together, "I may have to entice you. This thing might be a very swell item for Dad's political future, you know."

He chuckled her under the chin. "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," he told her. "I must look up the competition."

"Huh?" she asked with a slight, per-

plexed frown.

"The opposition may have two beautiful daughters," he laughed.

"None," said Patricia with a smile.

"Um—then—"

"Me—I'm going to wade!" she said suddenly. She slipped off her shoes and stockings and stood up.

"I do not advise that," he told her with a slight grin.

"I seldom take advice," she laughed.

She went forward and dangled one big toe into the lake. It was pleasant, and so Patricia stepped full into the water. There was a screech and she retreated swiftly.

"Migawsh!" she spluttered, hopping around on the other foot. "What's in there?"

"That lake is stream-fed from the hills," he told her. "This isn't really mid-August. This is still April in the rest of the country around here."

"Makes one forget, doesn't it?" she said dropping to the blanket again.

Jim nodded. From his pocket he took a large linen handkerchief and dried her foot. Patricia slipped back into shoes and stockings.

"One more cigarette," she asked, "and then I must go home."

He smiled regretfully. It was a shame to see such a fine day come to a close. . . .

"What was that screech?" said Blackman.

"I don't know. Sounded female to me."

"Nearly finished?"

"Snake, probably," grunted Blackman.

"Yep."

"Okay. Then we leave but quick. They'll be coming back now that some snake has invaded Eden."

Making all haste, they packed up and left. When they reached town, they went directly to Hendy's office. Charles Hendy heard their report, then leaned back in his heavy desk chair and looked over the desk. "And it's still going fine?" he asked.

"Fine as silk," replied Blackman.

"Good. You keep on the trail. We're doing fine." Hendy grinned evilly. "Not only will the public like Hendy for discovering this," he said, "and giving it to them, but they will be rather irate at Morris and Company for having had it so long without mentioning it."

"But they—won't—"

Hendy waved a newspaper. "This is mine," he said expansively. "This one will

uncover the fact that Morris intended to keep his discovery secret until just before election. That'll fix Morris."

"What are we doing?" asked Howardson.

"We are going to hustle," said Hendy.

Out in the central part of Minnesota, a few weeks later a vast tower reared skyward. Men swarmed the girders, riveting and welding. Up and up the tower went, reaching skyward as the weeks went by. A special high-tension line snaked across the countryside heading for the location, and construction workers built a medium-sized building at the foot of the tower.

Skyward it went, and then at the top they started to weld together the segments that were the lower circle of a sphere. Rounder and more perfect grew the sphere as the weeks went by, and as it progressed toward completion more and more, men polished the outside until it was mirror smooth and silvery-shining. Trucks of equipment came on a special trail.

ONLY in such a remote location could such a thing be built. Only with great wealth could such a thing be financed. Up it went, with many people knowing about it, but not once were the proper authorities notified that the State of Minnesota was sprouting a metallic mushroom of Paul Bunyanian proportions.

Hendy was a great fixer. Even the airlines were re-routed from the district, for they, too, observed the signs.

The Army believed it to be a Navy proving station of some sort and shunned it like the plague, while the Navy thought it had to do with an Army program and wouldn't have gone any closer to that section of Minnesota than they could have approached with the *U.S.S. Minnesota* itself. The Marines asked no questions.

And so progressed the work—and the summer and a romance. Jim could not leave his little garden, felt that it might be dangerous to leave. So Patricia came often. As the summer wore on and the rest of the country reached the temperature known to Jim's garden spot since early spring. No longer was the lake cold, and Patricia climbed to the top of a small tower and did a perfect back flip into the inviting waters of the lake. She came up blowing, to smile at Jim when he turned from tending the fire to remark that she had displayed perfect form.

Patricia felt amused, also, because they were toying with an open fire when there was the finest in electric stoves not more than an eighth of a mile from there, where the coffee would be brewed perfectly, the hot-dogs would not taste of smoke, and the potatoes not be filled with sand.

But this was more fun.

"What?" chuckled Patricia, looking around. "No salt?"

"No salt?"

"No salt."

"Shucks."

"Shucks nothing. Me get. Stick around, Pat."

"Don't bother," she told him.

"But look, it's only a few yards. I can get it quickly."

"It's not important."

"Look, Pat, open-fire baked-potato might taste all right to you without salt, but not to me—and when I bring it back I won't give you any—yah!"

"Why bother?" she insisted.

"Because, little one, it's no bother!" He put a hand under her chin and lifted her face. He kissed it quickly but tenderly, then turned and started to dog-trot towards the main building of his cluster.

In the house Howardson saw him coming.

"Whoa!" yipped Howardson.

"Who?" demanded Blackman.

"Tennis—on the run."

"Let's get out of here!" cried Blackman.

"Too late—he's in!"

Tennis came dashing into the house. He skidded to a stop. His eyes winked in disbelief. Finding the intruders flustered him.

"W-what's going on here?" Tennis blurted out.

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## CHAPTER IV

### *Conspiracy Charges*

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**P**PROMPTLY the pair headed for Tennis, Blackman high, Howardson low. Then they charged, and Jim, still shocked, struck back.

They both hit him at one time, high and and all three went sprawling. On the bottom, Jim gouged outward, swung a mean elbow and caught something soft and yielding. A fist hit him in the face. He kicked upward

and hit something hard. A heavy blow caught him in the pit of the stomach and, simultaneously, a flailing arm batted him across the ribs. They rolled free, then, propelled by Jim's knees.

On their feet, Howardson leaped and Jim ducked below the swinging fists. Blackman came down on the back of his head with a heavy fist, driving him down again. He turned over on the floor and kicked upwards, catching Blackman in the solar plexus. Howardson kicked Jim in the side of the head, and the room reeled, darkly, mistily, and was all awry.

The intruders wrenched themselves free.

A loud bark cut into Jim's fading consciousness, and he struggled to his feet to watch Doby make a quick leap for Howardson. Blackman turned and kicked the dog, tugging at his pocket. The doberman turned on Blackman just as the man got the atomizer clear.

There was a spray from the atomizer, and the dog shrank back, pawing at his face.

Blackman and Howardson rushed out, heading toward the woods as Jim Tennis sank back onto the floor.

He awoke with his head in Patricia's lap.

"Wh—what gives?" he asked vaguely.

"I don't know," she said. "I heard Doby back and an automobile take off. I came to find out what had happened."

"Who were they?" he demanded.

"I don't know," she said.

Jim Tennis staggered to his feet and went to the laboratory table. There was a pencilled list of things to search for. The two men had left the miniature camera behind, and some diagrams.

"Spies," Jim said, his head clearing.

"Spies?" she asked in surprise.

"Spies," he said. "Patricia, who are they?"

"I wouldn't know," she said. "It's possible that someone followed me."

"Oh, fine," he snapped. "And if they've been doing that since last spring, they know plenty."

"Look, Jim," said Patricia. "Come on in with me. We'll see Dad. He'll know what to do!"

"How about Doby?" asked Jim, running out of the house and approaching the dog. The odor of ammonia was still strong, and Jim Tennis swore revenge.

"You go!" said Jim. "I'll take care of Doby."

Patricia leaped into her coupe, still dressed in dripping swim suit. She drove like mad until she heard the whine of a motorcycle siren behind her. She pulled to a quick stop, smiling.

"Where's the fire, sister?" said the motorcycle cop, stopping beside the coupe.

"No fire, Officer."

"Driver's license?"

"In my other suit," she chuckled.

"Funny, isn't it?" he demanded seriously.

"Not particularly. Look, officer, I'm Patricia Morris. This is an emergency, and if you'll give me a clearance to the Governor's mansion, I'll see that you're rewarded."

"Is this a gag?"

"No. Would I be entering the Governor's house in a wet swim suit for a gag?"

"Might. But I'll take a chance!"

AND so, having authority, Patricia drove the miles to the capital at high speed. As she headed into her father's house, leaving the officer to be congratulated by the wondering butler and the Governor's secretary, she saw her father coming out of his office with a frown.

"Dad!" she exploded. "I've got to talk with you. It's important!"

"Important, Patty?" he asked absently. "So is this!"

He held up a newspaper. On the front page was a huge picture of a tall tower surmounted by a glistening sphere. The headlines said:

CHARLES HENDY, PHILANTHROPIST, SUPPORTS WEATHER-CONTROL PROGRAM! NEW DEVICE TO BRING SUMMER WEATHER ALL WINTER! HENDY OFFERS SERVICE FREE!

"That," said Patricia, "is what I want to tell you about!"

Three hours later, Governor Morris was shaking his head regretfully in Jim Tennis's laboratory.

"If I'd only known," he said. "We could have protected you."

"But can't we do something?" pleaded Patricia.

"Not much. Jim can file on his patent, of course, and there is no doubt that he will get it. But since it will be claimed that the sciences were developed simultaneously, Hendy will allege that he reduced the thing to practice before you received your patent. All you need is some evidence that they stole

their ideas from you?"

Jim looked around. He shook his head. "This notebook is meaningless," he said. "There's a lot of listings and questions in it, but nothing that points to anything crooked. Nothing, anyway that would show conspiracy and they'd probably assert they were my own questions and scribbles. The camera and film mean nothing, since anyone can expose film. The diagrams are definitely copied from mine."

"Fingerprints?"

"Both men wore gloves."

"But on the camera and the booklet?"

"There's just that chance," admitted Jim.

"Well, you hold tight and I'll get the State's Attorney working on the case. Hang it, young man, you'll get protection if I can give it as Governor of this State."

Patricia touched Jim's arm, "My fault," she told him.

He patted her hand. "Couldn't have been helped," he said. "And all we can do is to wait it out again."

The door opened to admit the fingerprint expert from the State's Attorney's office.

"Without a doubt," he said firmly, "these are the fingerprints of Blackman and Howardson. I—"

"Give me that statement," snapped Jim Tennis. He grabbed the sheet of paper from the fingerprint expert's hand, jumped in his car, and drove away at top speed.

TENNIS was halted at the door to Charles Hendy's office. The secretary spoke into the communicator and shortly there was a reply, telling Mr. Tennis to enter.

Jim went in, loaded for bear.

"Hendy?" he demanded.

"I am Charles Hendy. What can I do for you?"

"Do you know men named Blackman and Howardson?"

"I do. They are men who are performing a great service for the public."

"Well, I'm charging them with theft, breaking and entering, and trespass."

"Indeed, And why?"

"I'm James Tennis. I am the inventor of the device you intend to use—the climate machine, as the newspapers call it."

"I've been under the impression that this machine was the invention of the men whose names you mentioned."

"They stole it from me!"

"That is a grave charge, Mr. Tennis.



Doubtless you have proof?"

Jim explained about the battle in his laboratory and the resulting collecting of the evidence bearing their fingerprints.

"If this is true, it places an entirely different picture of the case," replied Hendy suavely. "They are at the central plant now—unless they've fled, Mr. Tennis. However, I shall demand that they come here at once; which will take them until tomorrow morning. I suggest that you prepare your evidence and profess formal charges. We'll have a preliminary hearing before more is done with this case. I believe that Governor Morris and State's Attorney Jones are both very interested parties?"

"Yes," said Jim Tennis carefully, "but not so interested that justice will not be done!"

## CHAPTER V

### *Summery Winter*

**H**ENDY scowled at his pair of henchmen. It was very early in the morning, and both Howardson and Blackman were still blinky with sleep, whereas Hendy looked sharp despite his corpulence.

"You're a pair of halfwits," he sneered.

"We were—"

"Caught. And you were caught dead to rights."

"So now what happens?"

"If they trace you to me, there'll be the devil to pay."

Both men paled a bit. The devil they did not fear, but Hendy was a different matter. They would take their chances with Satan.

"It's a bust," said Hendy. "And you're it."

"But look, boss—"

"Shut up!" snapped Hendy. "You're both going to jail."

"But boss, you promised us protection," Blackman protested.

Hendy speared Blackman with a cold eye. "It'll keep you quiet, too," he said.

"But—"

"I keep hearing you say nothing except 'but,'" said Hendy in a scornful voice. "I don't like it. It interrupts my thinking. If I hear that word again you'll be sorry."

There was no interruption this time.

"Now, you fools got caught. I'm now so

deep in this publicly that I can't disclaim you. However, bright gentlemen, you stole that gadget on your own hook and sold it to me as your own idea. See?"

"We see."

"Believing that I had every right to this thing, I went ahead. You criminals, you thieves, you blackguards, you will go to jail for your temerity. You will, of course continue to receive your salary and, so soon as I am elected governor, I'll see that you are released on some sort of pretext, pardon, or parole."

"I suggested that we might sell it to you once we got it," said Howardson in an oily manner. "Blackman planned the way to steal it."

"Check." Hendy pressed a button and a secretary entered. "Miss Altman, please call the police and have an officer sent up at once."

"Trouble, Mr. Hendy?"

"Yes, indeed," thundered Hendy. "These fine pair of intellectuals believed that they could steal an invention and palm it off as their own."

"What crooks!" said the secretary. "I always thought they had dishonest faces. Aren't you afraid to be left alone with them?"

Hendy stood up and towered over the pair. "I can handle them," he stormed.

The pair of worthies were handcuffed and under the watchful eye of an officer when Jim Tennis, Governor Morris, and State's Attorney Jones entered the office. Hendy nodded and pointed to Howardson and Blackman.

"Are these the gentlemen who stole your invention?" demanded he.

Jim Tennis shrugged. "They are the same pair that I had the fight with."

"The circumstantial evidence is overwhelming," Hendy said with a smile. "No one knows whether they took the idea, but they were stealing something from your place and they were selling something to me that sounds very much like it came from your place. Officer, take them away!"

**T**ENNIS looked askance at Morris. The Governor shrugged.

"There remains only a matter of the settlement of honor between Mr. Tennis and myself," said Hendy. "Surely Mr. Tennis must admit that I have been operating in good faith."

Attorney General Jones cleared his throat. "I doubt very much that any evidence could show that you have not," he said drily.

"You sound as though such evidence may have been concealed," said Hendy stiffly.

"Not at all," said the State's prosecutor. "My statement was merely that finding such evidence would be most difficult. You are assuming that such evidence does not exist."

"Furthermore," said Jim Tennis, "this situation evolves into a situation where I must either accept your 'good faith' or darned soon prove otherwise. Give just cause, and so forth. Right?"

"You place me in a very embarrassing position," complained Hendy. "I should like to prove conclusively, but I believe my scientifically-minded young friend here will admit that negative evidence is seldom conclusive. It is almost impossible to prove the absence of anything. Right?"

"Correct."

"There remains the settlement," said Hendy suavely, but appearing quite sincere. "I believe it only fair that my investment be protected in some way—after all, I spent considerable of a sum money in this philanthropy. Oh—he said quickly as he saw dubious expressions starting to form, "—please do not indicate that you think me idiotic. If this scheme works, and the State of Minnesota is maintained at summer temperature all winter, I shall happily give my investment to the State of Minnesota. I shall make my return out of similar machines, erected at a profit for every state in the union requiring one. This shall become world-wide, eventually."

He smiled at the nods of agreement.

"However, I find that this invention is not my own," he went on. "It rightfully belongs to my young friend Tennis. It shall be his. I only ask one favor. I ask that it be known that I did and do and will hand over to the State of Minnesota this machine, built out of my own funds from the plans of its inventor James Tennis. I am, you see," he said, spreading his hands wide, "offering nothing that I rightfully own for the sake of my reputation."

"How about the money?" asked Jim.

"A considerable sum," nodded Hendy. "But a sum I can afford, so long as it is not too well known that Charles Hendy was taken over by a pair of confidence men."

Governor Morris nodded perceptibly. State's Attorney Jones lifted an eyebrow as

though to ask what Hendy had under cover. Jim Tennis shrugged.

"All you ask is that it be known that I supplied the plans instead of those two thugs?" Jim mused.

"That is all," said Hendy. "Otherwise, James Tennis, things are as they seem. They were your plans; it was my money. Clear?"

"Okay," said Jim. As they left the office, Jim envisioned selling his idea to the earth and felt that losing one machine was small enough loss, since he had not paid for it.

After they left the office, Charles Hendy began cursing Howardson and Blackman for their stupidity in losing for him the makings of a fortune, but then he was planning to control it anyway. After all, a machine of that potency could and would control countries! He who controlled the Tennis Climate Machine would control the earth!

**W**INTER came. It came like its usual cold fury to the rest of the United States and Canada. A standard, normal, nasty winter. Michigan Boulevard in Chicago was hit with Lake blizzards; Fountain Square in Cincinnati was piled with drifted snow. The streets of Manhattan were mixed mud and snow, which prompted one of the daily newspapers to invent a new word: "Smud" to describe it. Boston was a snow-piled city from one end to the other.

But Minnesota was a verdant, semitropical gardenland. From the center, where it was downright hot, the temperature dropped gently as the edge of the vast circle was approached. At the very edges, where the blowing winds came into the charmed circle, the air was brisk and cool.

It is improper to say that immigration set in. Immigration had been high ever since the announcement of tropical heat. People who ordinarily went to Florida for the winter went to Minnesota. In fact, people who lived in Florida and California and Bermuda all the year around went across ice-strewn fields of winterland to visit the oasis of warmth.

Scientists came by droves, scientists who came to measure and calculate and predict, and scientists who came to enjoy a vacation. And each state sent its own representatives to see what could be done about buying the same for their own states.

There were the standard proportion of crackpots and religious fanatics who claimed that God (or their own particular, personal

deity) would most certainly visit his anger upon those who insisted upon tampering with that which was His domain. No one paid any attention to them, but they were there.

There were also a number of people who left Minnesota because they enjoyed a cold winter. They were not missed.

Christmas was green; and not the usual dull green of the occasional green Christmas of other years. This was a lush Green Christmas with farmers watching waving fields of grain while their sons cut the Christmas Tree in shirt sleeves. Cattle grazed on verdant pastures while the Christmas carols were being sung, and mothers were forced to explain lamely that Santa Claus had his sleigh equipped with wheels so that he could come as usual.

He did arrive, too, because with an extra crop, the farmers were well equipped with that necessary essential with which to buy gifts, while the city dweller prospered due to the great influx of visitors, guests, and people who had something either to buy or sell.

By contrast, moving picture lovers went home through snow and ice, grumbling because the newsreels gave a large piece of film devoted to the glorious climate enjoyed by the people of Minnesota on Christmas Day.

In the Governor's mansion, Jim Tennis caught Patricia Morris under the mistletoe. This was lip-service to the custom in all entendre of the phrase. It might be dramatic to give an account of their first kiss, but Patricia hung the mistletoe with non-malice aforethought and carefully and brazenly stood there with parted lips, waiting. Jim required absolutely no signposts—and it is equally true that Jim required absolutely no mistletoe, either. It was just a conventional nod to custom, was that mistletoe.

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## CHAPTER VI

### *A Cold Surprise*

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**A**N HOUR later Jim arose from the chairs where they had been sitting without the mistletoe, and handed Patricia to her feet. He felt in an inner pocket and came up with a small envelope.

"Tickets," he said. "And curtain's at

eight o'clock."

Patricia nodded. "Four minutes to repair my face," she said. "And I'm ready!"

As they were approaching the front door of the Governor's home, Governor Morris himself came driving up in a furious haste, skidded his car to a stop at the bottom of the stairs and leaped out. Up the stairs he came two at a time, hurled the front door open and saw Patricia and Jim. Then he took a deep breath and said "Thank God!"

"Why do you say that, Dad?" Patricia asked.

"Look, kids," he said, as soon as he caught his breath. "I don't want to do this. I'm in your favor, all the way."

"But what?" asked Jim suspiciously.

"You two mustn't go out this evening!" Morris said.

"But why?"

Morris shook his head. "I don't like it," he said.

"Don't like what?"

The Governor looked at Jim with a hurt smile. "Jim, my boy, believe me, you have my blessing and so help me, I think you can handle her. But this is above it, hang it. I must ask your indulgence in the whim of an old man."

"What's going on, Pop?" demanded Patricia.

"The *Sentinel* has me—we—us—across a barrel," blurted Morris.

"Huh?"

The Governor took out a tabloid daily and opened it to the editorial page. They read:

#### POLITICAL MOVE?

Governor Morris is an astute politician. Never unwilling to give his constituents the best that is available, Governor Morris is politically intelligent enough to give them the best—at the best time for his own political future.

Witness the clever manner in which the Hendy-Tennis Climate Machine was handled. A wonder of the age, it has been presented to the People of Minnesota.

But by whom?

Certainly the fact that James Tennis and Miss Patricia Morris are firm friends and that a wedding is rumored to be impending should be sign enough that Governor Morris was aware of his daughter's friend and the kind of work he was doing.

Could Governor Morris have been waiting for an election year before unveiling this Eighth Wonder of the World?

This is unanswerable. It is rendered unanswerable only because thieves broke in to the secret laboratory of James Tennis and sold his invention to a man who accepted it in good faith to present

to the State of Minnesota. We believe that Charles Hendy is to be given every credit for giving the People the best—regardless of when it turns up.

But it would have been a smart political move. Or do we assume that James Tennis and the Governor's Family are more closely attached to one another than most persons are aware?

"Um," said Jim.

"Oh, Pop!" cried Patricia. "It's so unjust!"

"That's it, kids," said Governor Morris. "And it ain't good. If they see you two together tonight, everybody is going to be oversensitive about this editorial. I hate to ask you, but this is not only a game I'm playing; I'm running a life's work, and I believe that I am protecting the State of Minnesota against a very clever politician. If Charles Hendy runs for election, we'll know it."

"Conniving Hendy!" snarled Jim Tennis. "What a trickster! I hope he burns his fingers!"

"Okay, Pop. We'll not parade ourselves tonight. We'll stay in, Jim. There'll be other nights."

**J**ANUARY wore into February and people grinned at one another on Groundhog day and told one another that they did not mind the clear bright sky, for they could stand the delayed spring so long as the remaining winter were no worse than it had been. Other sections of the country gritted their teeth in snow and ice at the newsreels that showed a girl, wearing a swim suit in a green flowery garden, petting a groundhog.

February went into March, which came in like a hibiscus and went out like a hyacinth, and into April which had somewhat the appearance of a drowned rat.

"Unusual weather," they called it.

And the *Sentinel* editorials harped on the Governor's silly political move that had failed. These editorials seemed to be timed after each date between Jim Tennis and Patricia.

While Jim was swearing about being as big a political football as his machine, the great sphere in the center of the state continued to pour out its warmth. It was turned off now, for spring was approaching, and soon the external temperature would be approaching that enjoyed within the state. This was done at the suggestion of meteorologists who pointed out that one of the tempering factors of a warm summer was the thermal energy necessary to raise the frozen land to a summer heat. Thermal input from Sol being thermal input per se, they feared that the rise

from zero-odd to ninety degrees as normal might become a rise from ninety degrees to one hundred and eighty-odd.

Accordingly, the machine was turned off. April passed into May and May turned blithely into June. It was noticeably cooler now, for the machine had stopped pouring its heat into the ground and the air.

And on the fifteenth of June there came a chill spell and a faint flurry of snow.

Hastily, the machine was turned on—

But the flurry of snow became a blizzard. Snow swamped Minnesota from end to end. For four days it snowed, and icicles hung from tree and wire and roof.

A hasty message was sent to the Climate Machine, and there was no answer. Then Jim Tennis was sent for, and a group started to head for the machine. Minnesota became colder and, as they approached the site of the machine, the weather became more bitter. It was Polar climate by the time they approached to within ten miles of the machine, and the expedition sent back for Polar equipment. It was flown in on ski-equipped planes, and the expedition—for it had become that—continued.

Almost topped by a mighty snowdrift, the shining silver-plated ball seemed to rest atop the snow. Considering that the tower was a full six hundred feet tall, the snowdrift was staggering. The expedition stopped.

The biting cold from the sphere was noticeable.

Tennis shook his head. "So," he said.

Roberts, one of the technicians sent along with Jim, nudged his elbow. "What's with the gang running the thing?"

"When you're buried under six hundred feet of snow," said Jim, "you're in trouble—especially when the house below was made of summer-flimsy. They had an air-conditioning unit, remember? But not a heater in the place!"

Roberts took off his hat solemnly. Then his face hardened and he said, "I was about to accuse them of turning the machine on backwards!"

Jim shook his head. "Unless they know more about it than I, it's impossible," he said. "There's more to this than meets the eye. Confound it, there *can't* be any power entering that machine!"

"That's what the powerline company claimed," admitted Roberts. "But what do we do now?"

"We can't drill down through six hundred

feet of ice an snow," said Jim. "The lower layers are probably packed into solid ice by the pressure."

**R**OBERTS looked at the naked ball of silvery metal. "Why isn't that thing encrusted with ice?" he asked.

"That thing is much colder than the freezing point," said Jim. "And it is *radiating cold*. A drop of water coming down would freeze solid long before it hit, and when it hit the droplet of ice would glance off."

"So what do we do?"

"We can cut the cables below it," said Jim. "That won't take much burrowing."

The caterpillar treads of the Polar gear fought with the bank of snow and dug in deep, for it was not true snow but hard-frozen sleet beneath their treads. Droplets too cold to form snow crystals; they had landed and stayed there like a myriad of minute, irregular ball bearings. A few yards below the surface, they were welded together by the pressure, however, and the Polar equipment hurled great fountains out in mighty arcs as they plowed their way along.

With heaters going at full blast, the Polar machines approached the sphere.

"Notice that the warmer place is between the heaters and the sphere?" asked Tennis. "And on one side only?"

"Yeah, but why?"

Jim smiled wryly. "You can't properly state that anything is *radiating cold*. 'Cold' is but the 'Absence of heat.' You cannot radiate the absence of anything. But, con-found it, you can attract and absorb a positive thing. That sphere is drawing the heat from everything. Despite the fact that the heaters are supposed to radiate in all directions, all of their thermal energy is being drawn toward the sphere—like air being drawn into a vacuum!"

"How are you going to cut that connection?" demanded Roberts, after thinking the previous statement over for a moment.

"It's not too hard," said Jim. "We're going to drive our plow-blade right through it!"

Under the tower they went, under the shining sphere, and at the central cable that ran from the generating equipment below to the radiating sphere. There was but a minor shock as the rotating blade hit the cable, and a lurch as some of the cable wound itself in the rotating blade and tried to lift the plow. Then the machine settled once more and as

they emerged on the far side, Jim pointed to a thirty foot length of cable wound in the blade.

"Any power that can get across that gap—" he said. His voice trailed away in wonder.

For the sphere was still drawing the heat from the heaters.

"What can we do, now?" Roberts asked.

Jim shook his head. "Dynamite!" he said with gritted teeth.

One hour later—and from a safe distance—they watched the vast sphere of metal distort, burst into segments like a crushed orange, blast outward like an exploded basketball, and throw curved shards of itself in all directions. A depression formed below the site in the snow, and where the sphere had been there was nothing.

Nothing?

Nothing but an invisible sphere—invisible and intangible—that continued to suck heat from everything that possessed an erg.

They delineated the sphere and discovered it to be the same size as the metal one had been. But they could not remove—nothing. The expedition turned and fled.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Cutback in Time*

**W**HEN the expedition got back to the state capital, Jim Tennis hurried to the Governor's mansion.

"That," said Jim Tennis to Governor Morris, "is what I've been fearing, why I wanted to test the thing thoroughly before announcing it. It wouldn't have really shown in my laboratory test, for I did not set the pilot model up until late in the winter. I was prepared to wait one solid year, however, before making the invention public."

"But why?" asked Governor Morris.

"I don't know," said Jim helplessly. "But it should really fix Charles Hendy's clock!"

"Think about it tomorrow," suggested Morris. "You're tired. Take it easy for a night and go to work on it in the morning."

Jim nodded wearily. He was suddenly aware of the toll that the expedition had taken. He would work better for a few hours of relaxation. He smiled in a wan way at Patricia who smiled at him affectionately.



Jim relaxed. But in the same city, Charles Hendy was not relaxing one bit. In his office he had several newspaper reporters, and he was working hard at being a politician:

"I'm perplexed, gentlemen," he said.

"Mr. Hendy, you started this in good faith?"

"Of course. I'd as soon cut off my arm as bring this disaster to Minnesota."

Moran of the *Sentinel* asked: "Is it possible that James Tennis might have known what would happen?"

Hendy blinked—a well-planned blink. "You are suggesting that Howardson and Blackman may have been in the employ of the Morris-Tennis gang?"

"I am merely hypothesizing."

"I'd hate to accuse anyone of that," said Hendy modestly. His reply was made in such a manner that everybody present knew that what he meant was that he merely lacked proof.

"Offering a political rival a weapon with which he can commit political suicide is not a new idea," said the reporter, operating on a well-laid plan.

"No?"

"I understand that there is to be a grand jury investigation," said Moran.

"It will find me blameless," said Hendy. "But perhaps it will fix the responsibility. I feel like a helpless pawn, or perhaps an unwilling and ignorant executioner. I think perhaps Howardson and Blackman should be questioned."

"Thank you, Mr. Hendy. Now I must leave because I gotta make a deadline," said Moran.

"You other gentlemen may remain if you wish," smiled Hendy. "If you wish to cover Mr. Moran's deadline to prevent a news scoop, you may use the telephones here."

In a corner of the room there was a portable bar and sandwiches on a table. The idea intrigued the reporters, and after using the telephones, they fell to with a will—

—which gave Moran of the *Sentinel* plenty of time to drive to the prison where Howardson and Blackman were incarcerated for their little trick. Moran asked for Blackman, and when the prisoner came, Moran started questioning:

"I understand that there is to be a grand jury investigation."

"Oh?" answered Blackman.

"It is suggested that perhaps you were a cohort of James Tennis."

"Perhaps."

"And if so, you offered Hendy this devilish machine as a bit of bait, hoping he would commit political suicide?"

Blackman smiled. "Could be."

**F**OR a few seconds the reporters stared at Hendy. Then one of them said:

"Then, of course, Jim Tennis is the real crook, and Governor Morris is as low a criminal as he is. How on earth did he coerce you? Blackmail?"

"Might be," Blackman nodded. "But what of Hendy?"

"Charles Hendy thinks only of the people. How could he possibly have known that he was being bilked. He is a great philanthropist, not a scientist. Besides, the machine rightfully belongs to James Tennis, you know. It is his—and he can have it!"

"I think I know what you mean. Mind if my friend Howardson is told of the later developments?"

"No," said Moran, keeping a very straight face. "He's a most interested party. Perhaps Tennis had something on him, too?"

"I'll ask him," said Blackman.

The grand jury investigation started. The word of a felon is not too well accepted. Yet there was the suspicion of a doubt, and they worked at it thoroughly.

In the grand jury room, Jim Tennis fumed and swore at their damning testimony even though it was based on the word of felons. The trouble was that Howardson and Blackman had been convicted of felony carried out by them. To have them point out someone high up who had aided the plot gave their story an aura of truth.

Being no scientists nor directly involved in politics, there had been some question as to why a pair of felons would take the time and the trouble to steal an invention when there were banks and other places to burglarize. The slightly fishy aroma cleared—even though it left a bad taste in the mouth.

Finally the grand jury retired to consider the evidence. After an hour or so, they returned to the box and the foreman gave a folded paper to the bailiff who carried it to the judge. After reading the verdict of the jury to himself, the judge cleared his throat. "James Tennis, arise," he said sternly.

Jim Tennis stood up.

"Regardless of motive or outcome of other men's machinations, James Tennis, there is no doubt in the minds of this jury that you

are responsible for our seasonal disaster. Therefore, before returning an indictment against you for endangering the health of the people of the State of Minnesota, I ask if you have anything further to say."

"Your Honor, had my plans not been stolen, this would not have happened," Jim protested.

"That is no excuse for perfecting such a machine which has become a grave peril."

"My invention would have been harmless had it been correctly used," retorted Jim.

"Therefore," continued the judge angrily, "I return this indictment against you, upon behalf of the Grand Jury of the County of—"

"Your Honor!" said Jim Tennis loudly. "Before you sign that indictment, may I remind you that I cannot solve this problem from a cell?"

"That's true," said the judge dubiously. "We are aware that you know more of this—this—questionable scientific feat than any other man alive. So I shall revise my procedure. I shall suspend the jury's findings for a period of ten days, during which period, James Tennis, you will direct your activities toward solving the weather problem. If at the end of that time, you have produced a solution, the indictment shall be dismissed. If not, you will be tried on charges."

"Ten days!" gasped Tennis in baffled fury. "What can any man do in ten days?"

But the Court was adamant and a short while later, Tennis was released, baffled and confused, to return home. All the rest of the day he worked hopelessly at the problem, beset by worry, yet trying desperately to discover the reason for the amazing variations which his weather machine had unexpectedly developed.

ONE night Patricia found Jim sitting dejectedly before his small model, his brow creased as he stared at the vacuum tubes and high inductance coils.

"I don't know, Pat," he told her. "I honestly do not know."

"But what does it do?" she asked.

"I don't know," he repeated.

"Then how does it work? Can't you guess something from that?"

"Patricia—mine, I've been guessing for eight days now and I'm out of guesses. Work? I don't—well, I can tell you what happens. You start with a simple circuit—like this. That's a sort of threshold circuit; a field generator sort of. The thing that

counts is the voltage at this point.

"As you run it up, you eventually strike a point where the heat-output is at maximum. Beyond that point it cools off again. Generally speaking, that is. It vacillates quite a bit, and on the way 'up' for instance, you hit several peaks and valleys, the average of which is a trend upward."

"Once you hit the peak, you throw in the locking circuit, which maintains the voltage on this anode at the proper value to develop the maximum output. A simple automatic bias control."

"This one," he continued in a puzzled voice, "behaves differently. The first very few volts causes a chill, after which it gets normal and behaves as the rest of them did. I'm stumped, Patricia."

Governor Morris came in with a wan smile. "Jim, lad. Any hope?"

"None," he said. "I'm licked."

"Sorry, kids. Dead sorry. But I've just decided that the ambitions of an old man aren't worth ruining several young lives for."

"What do you mean?" asked Jim.

"I've prepared a statement and a complete pardon for you, Jim, absolving you from all guilt as an innocent victim of circumstances. Hendy will leap onto that with both feet. But I'll not see you sacrificed."

"But, blast it all, you can't do that!"

"No? Well, you can't spend ten years in the calaboose to spite a political machine. It isn't worth it."

"But we can't let 'em beat us!"

"Forget it," said Morris, "and tell me what you've been doing."

"Trying to figure out how it works," replied Jim. "Or, rather, why! I've been back and forth across all the theory and abstract ideas that I've ever had. I'm completely stuck—as baffled as Benjamin Franklin might have been if he had been shown a radio receiver and told that it ran by electricity. How and why are unanswerable, so far."

"So," he continued unhappily, "I've been wondering where the energy came from. I've got just a few hours left before I—before I—before—"

His voice trailed away. Patricia, to keep his mind from the imminent doom, said the first thing that came into her mind.

"The machine is still good, Jim," she said. "At least, it takes some of the heat of last summer and saves it over for the winter—"

"Hev!" he exploded.

"Hey, what?" she asked him.

"Maybe it doesn't save some of *last* summer's heat," he said, thoughtfully. "Maybe it takes the heat from *next* summer!"

"Can you prove that?"

"Yes, if we can remember to shove this thing in the refrigerator all day tomorrow. That might account for the initial dip—" He paused. "But that's no solution," he said.

"Oh," said Patricia, "but it is!"

They looked at her dumbly. Patricia began to explain. . . .

**B**RIGHT and early, Jim Tennis appeared in the Grand Jury Room to address the judge. Seated up front in one of the chairs was Charles Hendy who had gone there to witness the discomforture of his political rivals. He was positive the indictment would be returned against Tennis.

"Your Honor," said Tennis, "this is a case of the misuse of a scientific principle. The discover of electricity is not responsible for the deaths each year by electrocution. The inventor of the airplane cannot be held responsible for the deaths there, either.

"I have discovered that this invention of mine actually delivers the energy which will be received by it at a later date. In other words, what happened was that last winter the machine was sending forth the energy which would be received by it the following summer. Thus, of course, when summer arrived, the summer heat had already entered the machine and had been sent back to make last winter warm, when we enjoyed it.

"This I can prove.

"However, this is no solution. The solution is, of course, to rebuild the machine, and 'tune' it for the summer following. This must be done carefully so as not to make the following summer cold and bitter. If the machine is used very carefully, and with considerable planning, it can accomplish the one thing that mankind has always wanted done: Saving some of August's intolerable heat to diminish the rigors of January's bitter cold. We—Your Honor—are the victims of our own avarice in wanting perfect summer all winter. Moderation is the answer."

"You are a lucky young man," said the judge. "I give you a sharp judicial warning not to let dynamite lying around loose for felons to steal, and I hereby permanently dismiss the indictment returned against you eight days ago." The judge's voice grew thoughtful. "But before the court is dis-

missed, may I ask how you proved that the machine actually drains 'Next Summer's' heat to warm 'Last Winter' and so forth?"

"The Climate Machine is actually a time machine," said Jim Tennis promptly.

"Time Machine?" exploded Hendy scornfully.

Jim Tennis turned and pointed to Hendy. "The same means of proving my point indicts you, Mr. Charles Hendy. Your Honor, I have here a series of pictures taken by myself. It shows Miss Patricia Morris in her car, wrecked. It shows the path she took through the woods. It shows—ultimately—Messrs. Blackman and Howardson following her. It shows Blackman and Howardson leaving, and the route they took to get to the home of the great philanthropist Charles Hendy."

"When were these pictures taken?" asked the judge.

Tennis grinned. "Less than an hour ago—and a year ago, both. I went back in time."

Hendy, grasping for any irregularity, spoke up sharply. "Can you prove that these pictures are not faked? Just name me one proof that you were there at all? Just one. Who saw you? Who recalls you? Have you a witness?"

Tennis stammered. "Why—I—"

There came a gurgling cry from the rear of the courtroom. It had been uttered by Patricia Morris, who came forward with a smile. But it was a relieved smile, and there was something in her eyes that told Jim Tennis that the relief was far more personal than the facts of the trial or of any other matter at present hand.

"So you," she said to Jim Tennis, "are the big lug in the overcoat, muffler, and overshoes who cradled me out of my damaged car—and kissed me!"

Patricia turned to the judge and explained. Then, with a twinkle in her eye, she finished: "And now, Your Honor, there remains but one item to prove to my satisfaction that it is the same man. That muffler he hung over the coat-track looks the same, but might have been coincidental. Similarly the overcoat and the overshoes. Also other minor details, including the possible fact that the lipstick he forgot to wipe off matches my own.

"But there's only one man who—"

"Court dismissed!" exploded the judge quickly. After all, what Jim Tennis was about to do might be considered in contempt of Court.



Mr. Tedder ran into a wisp of fog which tore at his lungs

# THE DEVIL OF EAST LUPTON, VERMONT

By WILLIAM FITZGERALD

*The devil lived on a hill and wherever he moved people fell before him—but no one knew who or what he was!*

**T**O THIS day nobody pretends to understand the Devil of East Lupton, Vermont. There are even differences of opinion about the end to which that devil came. Mr. Tedder is sure he was the fiend in question, and that he ceased to be fiendish when he rid himself of the pot over his head.

Other authorities believe that heavy ordnance did the trick, and point to a quarter-mile crater for proof. It takes close reasoning to decide.

But if by the Devil of East Lupton you mean the Whatever-it-was that came out

of Somewhere to Here, and caused all the catastrophes by his mere arrival—why—then the Devil was the Whatever-it-was in the leathery, hidelike covering on the morning Mr. Tedder ran away from the constable.

On that morning, Mr. Tedder ran like a deer—or as nearly like a deer as Mr. Tedder could hope to run. The resemblance was not close. Deer do not hesitate helplessly between possible avenues of escape. Deer do not plunge out of concealing thickets to scuttle through merely shoulder-high brush because a pathway shows. But Mr. Tedder did.

The constable, behind him, shouted wrathfully. There was a thirty-day jail-sentence waiting for someone for vagrancy—which is to say, for not having any money. Mr. Tedder was elected.

He would not gain any money by staying in jail, but the constable who arrested him and the justice of the peace who sentenced him would receive fees for their activity. That was why this township was notoriously a bad place for tramps, bums, blanket-stiffs and itinerant workmen in need of a job.

"I can't go much further," Mr. Tedder thought. His heart thumped horribly. There was an agonizing stitch in his side. His breath was a hoarse, honking noise as it rushed in and out. Despair filled him as exhaustion neared.

He pounded, sobbing for breath, up a little ten-foot rise. His eyes tried to blur with tears. Then he lurched down the other side of the ridge and saw that he was in the neglected, broken-limbed orchard of an abandoned farm.

The house was partly collapsed and wholly ruined. A remaining shed leaned crazily. Vines climbed over a rail fence—three parts rotten—and went on along a strand of barbed wire nailed to tree-trunks.

He could run no further. He looked, despairing, for a hiding place. His haggard, ineffectual face turned desperately. He saw something dark and large. To his blurred eyes it looked like a cow. He ran toward it. It shrank back, stirring. . . .

There was a thin, high screaming noise, like gas escaping through a punctured tire, but a tire inflated to a monstrous pressure. There was a vast, foggy vaporousness. The dark shape made convulsive movements, but Mr. Tedder was too lost in panic to take note. He ran blindly toward it.

"Ug!" gasped Mr. Tedder.

The scream descended in pitch. A pungent, ammoniacal smell filled the air. Mr. Tedder ran into a wisp of fog which tore at his lungs. He choked and fell—which was fortunate, because the air was clearer near the ground. He lay kicking among dead leaves and dry grass-stems while a gray vapor spread and spread, and a very gentle breeze urged it sideways among the unkempt trees of the orchard.

The noise died away in a long-continued moan which included gurglings. It still sounded like gas escaping from very high pressure.

The gurglings were like spoutings of liquid within.

**B**UT Mr. Tedder was in no mood to analyze. He had been breathless to begin with. He had been strangled on top of that. Now he writhed in the dry grass, ready to sob because the constable would presently lay hands on him and haul him to jail.

He heard the constable shout again, furiously. Then Mr. Tedder heard him cough. The constable bellowed, "Fire!" and fled.

He ran into a tendril of wispy, creeping vapor which did look a lot like smoke. He fell down, strangling. Again the air was clearer among the tangled stalks of frost-killed grasses. The constable coughed and wheezed.

Presently he staggered away to report that a vagabond had set fire to the woods to hinder pursuit. But there was no fire. The chill vapor which looked like smoke very gradually dissipated. A cursory glance would send the fire-fighters home again.

Mr. Tedder lay sobbing and gasping on the ground, expecting at any instant to be seized. He panted in despair. But the constable did not reappear. He never returned. Mr. Tedder was alone, his escape good.

When he realized it, he sat up abruptly. His meek face expressed astonishment. He stared all about him. There was still a small space from which an ever-thinner gray vapor seeped away. There was a reek as of ammonia in the air—a highly improbable smell around an abandoned farmhouse.

Presently Mr. Tedder got to his feet. He brushed off the leaves and grass-stems which clung to his shabby garments. He was a few yards from a distinctly tumbledown woodshed and almost under a gnarled apple-tree to which a few leaves still clung, and where he could observe a single, dried-up apple clinging tenaciously to its parent bough.

The sight of the apple gave him pause. He hunted busily. He found windfalls. Untended, the apples would be wormy and small and belated at best. But Mr. Tedder had learned not to be over-fastidious. He found a dozen or more scrubby objects which were partly eatable. He ate them.

It was then that he heard a bubbling noise, like something boiling in a pot. The sounds came from the place where the gray mist rose. He went to the spot, and wrinkled his nose. The smell of ammonia was stronger. It seemed to come from a collapsed object on



the ground which was remotely like a deflated hide. A liquid came from a small rent in it and bubbled furiously to nothingness.

A student of physics would have said that it had an extraordinarily low boiling-point, like a liquefied gas. Mr. Tedder said nothing. He regarded the flaccid skin-like thing surprisedly. He had seen it a little while since, inflated and moving about.

There must have been something inside it to move it.

Mr. Tedder could see, of course, where it had a tiny tear. It had moved or been moved back against a single strand of barbed wire, hidden among vine-stems. It had punctured, and there it was. But Mr. Tedder could never have imagined a creature which required an extremely cold gas like ammonia and hydrogen, mixed, at extremely high pressure, in order to live. He could not have conceived of such a creature wearing a flexible garment to contain that high-pressure, low-temperature gas for it to breathe. Assuredly he would never envision anything, beast or devil, which at released pressure and the temperature of a Vermont autumn day would melt to liquid and boil away to nothing.

"It don't make sense," he muttered, scratching his unkempt head.

So Mr. Tedder, who could not think comprehendingly, did not think at all. He saw something on the ground—no, two things. They were metal, and they smoldered and smoked like the flat thing, because they were cold. They were unbelievably cold. One looked rather like an aluminum pot. But pots do not have chilly linked-metal straps in the place of handles, nor hemispherical knobs, a good inch and a half in diameter, on one rim. The other object looked like a gun. Not a real gun, of course. But vaguely, approximately, like a gun just the same.

He picked up the pot. It was all of an inch and a half thick. It was very light for such a thickness. Mr. Tedder cheered suddenly. It was undoubtedly aluminum. There is a market for scrap aluminum. East Lupton was out of bounds, of course, but there might be a junk-dealer in South Lupton. This ought to be worth fifty cents, and he might get a quarter for it.

"Two bits is still two bits," he thought.

He touched the other thing gingerly. It was still bitterly cold, but the frost melted under the warmth of his finger. It would weigh fifteen pounds or so. Another twenty-five cents. . . .

MR. TEDDER marched on happily. Then he came upon broken branches, freshly crushed down from trees. He saw another gray mist before him. He approached it cautiously. He saw where something had crashed down through the trees and knocked off the top of a six-inch maple. He pushed on inquisitively. . . .

The thing had ploughed into soft earth and almost buried itself. A foot-thick tree was splintered and had crashed to cover the object that had broken it. Mr. Tedder saw whiteness through the toppled branches. It seemed to be a sphere not much over ten feet in diameter, and it was completely covered with frost. A chilly mist oozed away from it. Mr. Tedder stared at it with the metal pot in one hand and the gun—if it was a gun—in the other.

There was silence save for the faintly sibilant whispering of the trees overhead. There was the lurid coloring of Vermont in the fall. A bird called somewhere, a long distance away. Then Mr. Tedder heard a motor running. It sounded very queer.

"Thud-thud-thud-thud-CHUNK! Thud-thud-thud-thud-CHUNK!" It was running in the frost-covered sphere under the fallen tree.

"I'll be darned!" he said aloud.

It occurred vaguely to Mr. Tedder that this and the deflated object back yonder were somehow connected. He picked his way cautiously around the smashed branches and shattered trees. Well away, he felt cheerful because he had escaped the law and picked up salable junk. The two objects were pretty heavy, too. The pot would fit on his head, though, and would be easier to carry so. He put it over his battered soft hat and drew the chain-link strap under his chin. Then he examined the thing like a gun. There was a knob on one side, an inch and a half in diameter. He tugged at it.

There was a sharp buzzing sound. Something that looked like flame came out of the end. It spread out in a precisely shaped, mathematically perfect cone, and blotted out brushwood, trees—everything.

Mr. Tedder jerked the knob back, startled, on the first sounding of the noise. The flame-like appearance lasted less than half a second. But where the flame had played upon foliage and brush there wasn't anything left. Nothing at all but a little fine ash, sifting down toward earth. And the grass and topsoil were eaten away as if a virulent acid

had been spilled over them.

Mr. Tedder stood frozen for the tenth part of a heartbeat. Then in one motion he threw away the gun and fled. The pot flopped down over his eyes, blinding him. He hit his head a terrific blow against a low-hanging limb. Instantly, it seemed to him, the chain-link strap tightened. He went almost mad with terror. But when he got the pot back so he could see, he fled with the heavy thing bobbing and bumping on his head.

Presently his own panting slowed him down. He remembered the knob on the rim of the pot. He stopped and fumbled with it. It came off in his hand with a crystalline fracture to show where it had broken in his first collision. He couldn't get the pot off.

He worked for a long time, sweating in something close to hysterical panic. He was terrified of the thing he had thrown away, and by transference, of the pot on his head. He desired passionately to be rid of it. He felt a sort of poignant desperation. But he would have to get somebody to cut the strap in order to be freed.

He came to the edge of the thicket beyond East Lupton. He looked out upon rolling country, undulating to the mountains' foot. There was a cluster of houses in the distance. Still terrified, and with the pot bumping on his head, Mr. Tedder struck out for the village.

He saw a tiny bundle of fur in his way. It was a dead rabbit. He passed on. He saw, very far ahead, a white dog running from a farmhouse to intercept him. But Mr. Tedder was not afraid of dogs. He was afraid of the pot on his head. Presently he saw the dog no more than ten feet away. It lay sprawled out, motionless. It looked dead. Then he saw the throb-throb of a heartbeat. It was asleep, or unconscious. He hastened on.

**H**E CAME to the highway and ran toward a wagon for help. And there was a horse lying down between the shafts. The man in the wagon, too, had sagged limply. Both were alive, but both were unconscious.

"Something screwy here," he thought.

Mr. Tedder had his own terror, but this was an emergency even more immediate than his own. He tried to help the man. He did get him down to the road, and laid him solicitously on the dead-grass bank by the side of the road. He loosened his clothing and went on toward the village at a run to sum-

mon help. Afterward he would get the pot off his head.

But the village was unconscious, too, when he got there. Male and female, man, woman, child, and beast, the inhabitants of South Lupton lay in crumpled heaps.

He saw a small boy unconscious over a toy wagon. A woman had collapsed into a laundry-basket beside a clothes-line. A little farther on, a mule lay with its legs spraddled absurdly. Then he saw two men flung headlong as if they had been running when weakness overtook them. It began to look as if alarm had come to the village.

People had thronged out of their houses to fall in heaps on the sidewalk, at their doors—everywhere. He saw a car that had run into a gas-pump, and just beyond another car which had run off the road and stalled on a hillside. Dogs, cats, chickens—the very pigeons and crows lay motionless on the ground.

Mr. Tedder felt a horrible panic, and the pot on his head bumped him, but he tried desperately to rise to the emergency this situation constituted. He tried to rouse the unconscious people lying in the street. He loosened clothing, he sprinkled water, he chafed hands—to no avail. His meek, normally apprehensive features went consciously stern and resolute.

Presently he tried to summon help by telephone, but there was a local exchange and the operator lay unconscious in her chair. In the end, and in desperation, Mr. Tedder commandeered a bicycle on which to seek aid.

The essential rightness of his character was shown by the fact that he rifled no purses. He looted nothing. The Bank of South Lupton lay open to him, and it did not occur to him to fill his pockets. He got on a bicycle and rode off like mad, the absurd pot bobbing on his head as he pedaled.

He came to a car that had smashed into a ditch and turned over. Flames licked at its gasoline-tank. Mr. Tedder leaped off the bicycle and dragged out an unconscious man and a little girl. He hauled them to safety and tried to put out the fire. He failed.

He pedaled on madly in quest of a doctor, when attempts to rouse these two people failed as had all the rest. He was in a new panic now, somehow. He remembered, though vaguely, talk of a broadcast of years before concerning the landing of Martians upon the earth. Mr. Tedder was not quite

sure whether Martians had landed or not, but somehow it suddenly frightened him to remember the frost-covered globe which had smashed trees in landing.

"You'd think I was Orson Welles or somebody," he gulped.

He reached the town of West Lupton. The names of towns in Vermont are not good evidence of Yankee ingenuity. The town itself was a tiny place of five hundred people. As he pedaled into it, it looked like the scene of a massacre. Its inhabitants lay unconscious everywhere. There were not even flies in the air.

Mr. Tedder did not give up for two full hours, during which he pedaled desperately in quest of some other conscious human being. By now his fear had come to be for himself, and it grew until it made him almost unaware of the ill-fitting, bumping pot upon his head. But at long last his teeth chattered.

"M-maybe," said Mr. Tedder quaveringly to himself, "I'm the only man left alive in these parts . . ."

With the terror came an impulse to hide. It was then late afternoon. It would soon be dark. He did not want to be in a town filled with still, not-dead forms after dark! He pedaled down a side road. It became a cart-track and climbed. It dwindled to a footpath. He dived into the obscurity of woodland as the shadows grew deep.

He came at last to an empty, rocky hilltop. Sunset was over. Only a lingering dim red glow remained in the west. Presently stars shone down. He looked up at them, sweating.

If that frost-covered thing had come from the stars, something from it—a sort of devil—had stricken down the hundreds of unconscious people Mr. Tedder had seen. Maybe it was getting ready for more of its kind. He stared upward and imagined other spheres swinging down out of the darkness overhead to gouge long furrows in the ground. Maybe such things were falling all over the world. . . .

**B**UT he could look across-country for miles. Presently he saw joyfully that there were electric lights. He saw motorcar headlights on the highways. In particular, he saw that the very last town he had entered was now brightly lighted and there was traffic moving in and out. . . .

"Well," he thought with relief. "Whatever it was, it ain't permanent." Come morning

he would have somebody cut loose the pot from his head.

He could not find fuel to make a fire, but he snatched some fitful sleep toward dawn. He was bitterly cold when he woke, though, and at earliest daylight he made his way back toward town.

The dawn light was still gray and dreary when he reached it. The streets were empty. But there was a motor-truck stopped by a store, its motor purring. And there was a man tumbled in a heap above a bunch of big-city newspapers he had just put out of the truck for delivery. The man was alive, but unconscious. There was a cat in a motionless furry heap beside him, as if it had come out to rub against his legs and had collapsed without warning.

Mr. Tedder, shivering, turned the man over. He was insensible. He could not be roused. Mr. Tedder felt hysteria stirring within him. The pot hurt his head, now. The places where it rubbed most often were getting sore. Then he noticed the headlines.

#### DISASTER IN VERMONT. DEVIL LOOSE, SAY VILLAGERS

##### Unexplained Mass Unconsciousness Strikes Countryside

In the gray twilight of dawn, with a softly purring truck behind him and before him an unconscious man, Mr. Tedder read.

South Lupton struck by strange, creeping unconsciousness that moved like a wall or an invisible flood of oblivion. . . . Entire village insensible for half an hour. . . . Some inhabitants undisturbed where they fell, others hauled about and pawed, but unharmed. . . . The same inexplicable insensibility moved along roads. . . . Man driving with his little daughter lost consciousness and came to to find his car overturned and burning, and himself and the little girl lying some distance away. . . . Farmers found their horses struggling up from unconsciousness. . . .

Mr. Tedder's throat went dry. He looked around furtively. This town had born the look of a shambles yesterday, when he was here. From the hilltop he had seen it alive. But now it was dead again. . . . Suddenly he remembered a white dog that had come running toward him across a wide pasture. When he got to the dog it was unconscious. . . .

"I wonder if. . . ." He could not face the thought.

Mr. Tedder shivered. He almost whim-

pered. But after a little he picked up the unconscious man before him. He dragged him into the back of the truck. He drove clumsily and unaccustomedly out of the town. There was a long, straight stretch of road. Mr. Tedder went well out upon it. He stopped and let the unconscious man carefully down to the side of the road. He got back in the driver's seat and drove away. He watched through the back-view mirror.

When he was a little more than half a mile away, the still figure stirred, rolled over, and got dazedly upright.

Mr. Tedder swallowed noisily. He drove on a little way and found a place where he could turn. He headed back. The owner of the truck still stood bewildered in the road. Mr. Tedder drove toward him. When he was still half a mile away, the man crumpled up and lay in a heap on the road. He was a flaccid, limp, insensible figure when Mr. Tedder brought the truck to a stop and loaded him in again.

He turned once more and rode on toward South Lupton. Mr. Tedder's face was a sickly gray color. The meekness of his normal expression was replaced by an odd, fixed horror. He had found two things which he believed came from the frosted ten-foot sphere. One was a weapon which destroyed everything when a knob on its side was touched. The other was this pot, with a strap which now held it fast upon his head.

**T**HE pot was a weapon too. It did not affect the one who wore it. The tightening of the strap when it went on was to make sure—pure anguish sharpened Mr. Tedder's perceptions—that it could not fall off while it was operating. If it did, the person—or the devil—wearing it would fall a victim too. It did not fit a man because it was designed for the brain-case of something else, something Mr. Tedder had seen vaguely as a dark moving object backing into a rusty barbed wire strung between two trees. If the pot—or helmet—had been turned on then, Mr. Tedder would never have seen anything. He would have fallen unconscious a half-mile away. . . .

He made a little sobbing noise in his throat. He drove unskillfully to South Lupton. One general store was open. He went into it and filled his pockets with canned food, a loaf of bread, and matches. He took two blankets from a shelf. He stepped carefully over the two clerks and four customers in the store.

They were on the floor, of course. He walked out of the store and away from the little town.

"I got to get back there," he said unsteadily. "I got to!"

A long while later he strode across rolling pasture-land. A white dog ran to intercept him. He saw it as a distant white speck. When he came up to it, it was a still, senseless heap. He went on to the woods and into them. It took him two hours to find the gash blasted in the woods by the gun-like thing. Then it took him another half-hour to find the gun.

He shivered when he picked it up, and carried it gingerly, but he noted that the metal was deeply pitted now. On the side that was next to the damp earth, the metal was eaten away to a depth of a quarter of an inch or more.

He found the abandoned orchard, and the half-collapsed and wholly ruined house. Then he sat down and stared dully at nothing, trying to think of a solution to his predicament.

Night fell but he sat in a sort of lethargy of despair for a long while. Ultimately he rolled up in the blankets. The pot on his head was horribly uncomfortable. It had not been made for a human head, and it did not fit. Twice during the night, also, he woke with a feeling of strangulation. He had stirred in his sleep and the tight chin-strap had choked him. The second time he found himself close to the metal gun. He had almost touched it. He made an inarticulate sound, such as a man might make who found himself about to step on a rattlesnake.

He got up and found the well of the abandoned farm. He dropped a clod of earth in it. It splashed. He dropped in the gun-like thing. Bubbling sounds followed. They lasted a long time.

He stayed at the abandoned farm for three days, living on the canned stuff he had taken. His cheeks grew sunken and his eyes querulously pathetic. Also, a sore place started from the rubbing of the pot on his head. On the second day he found the frosted globe again. The motor in it still ran. "*Thud-thud-thud-thud-CHUNK! Thud-thud-thud-thud-CHUNK!*" There was no sign that anything had come out. Perhaps there had only been one Whatever-it-was in it, and that had succumbed to a rip in its artificial hide by a bit of barbed wire. No trace of that thing remained, now. It had evaporated.

"Jellyfish. Like jellyfish," he told himself.

Mr. Tedder did not think in scientific terms nor speculate from what planet or star the Whatever-it-was had come. If he had been told that on the planet Jupiter there was an atmosphere of ammonia and hydrogen under enormous pressure, it would have meant nothing to him. The suggestion that the specific gravity of the giant planet meant that only light metals like sodium, potassium, and lithium—all interacting readily with water—could exist there. . . . Such a suggestion would have had exactly no meaning at all.

His mind dwelt exclusively upon the fact that any human being who came within a half-mile of him must fall unconscious and remain so. To the human race he was a menace; a devil. And that if he should manage to get the thick and clumsy pot off his head, he too would fall unconscious and remain so. He was in the most horrible solitary confinement imaginable.

He was invulnerable, to be sure. He could rob with impunity and do murder without fear of any penalty. But nobody could speak to him. Ever.

● On the fourth day he went into East Lupton for food.

On the fifth day aeroplanes flew overhead, back and forth. One suddenly went spinning, out of control, dipping down toward the treetops. It recovered, a bare few hundred feet up and three-quarters of a mile away. The planes disappeared.

On the sixth day bombs fell. The first racking explosions terrified him incomparably. He fled through the underbrush. He came out of it and saw soldiers. They made a cordon about an area of woodland probably two miles square. They toppled in unconscious heaps as Mr. Tedder drew near them, and as if that were a signal there were distant boomings and artillery shells fell close to where he peered out. Mr. Tedder ran away. He dodged shells and bombs until night fell, then he ran, weeping bitterly to himself.

"I ain't done nothing wrong!" The thought beat through his imprisoned head.

Of course the troops could not stop him. He pelted through their lines, unheeding. Presently he reached the village of East Lupton. No figures moved in it. Desperate, he entered it. There were many soldiers among the heaps of shallow-breathing, staring-eyed

folk who lay slackly wherever unconsciousness had overtaken them.

Mr. Tedder found food, and wolfed it. The store in which he found it was a country-village general store and sold everything. Mr. Tedder was half-mad, now. The thing he wore was an intolerable burden. One of the sore places on his head from its rubbing was excruciatingly painful. It was infected. Other sore places were developing. And he was a sort of devil, working havoc wherever he moved. He took weapons—for which he had no need—and metal-cutting tools he would not dare to use. . . . And he saw newspapers.

### GUNS TO BLAST DEVIL OF EAST LUPTON

He read the news account. The one-mile circle of insensibility had been deduced. Its cause was not understood, but it was certain that some senseless thing was its center. It moved. It had made definite travels and returned to its starting-point. Troops now cordoned the place where it nested restlessly, and artillery was being massed. A barrage that nothing could survive would presently be poured in. . . .

Mr. Tedder looked at a powerful, sleek car. He could take it and go anywhere, and all of humanity was powerless to stop him—or to help him. Anyone who came near him would fall senseless. Even he, if he took off the thing on his head. . . .

A motor-truck came rolling into the village, its driver stricken unconscious at the wheel. It seemed certain to roll on and on.

Mr. Tedder screamed at it. But something deflected its wheels. It curved sedately from the highway and plowed across a sidewalk and crashed into the corner of a house.

When the sun rose, Mr. Tedder was back at the abandoned farm which for no reason at all he considered his headquarters. His eyes were red with bitter weeping. His meek expression was utterly woebegone. But his determination was made.

Great bombers roared high overhead, so high they were mere specks. Things dropped from them. Boomings began, all around the horizon. Shells struck and blasted. The tumult, once begun, was unending.

Mr. Tedder cringed. Shaken and battered, he filed at the chain-link strap which held the pot on his head. The metal was soft, but the links shifted under his fingers, which



trembled uncontrollably.

A shell burst fifty yards away. Mr. Tedder was moved to sheer hysteria. He could do no such fine work as filing. He took the snips he had appropriated the night before. Once the thing was off his head, he would know nothing; no terror, no pain; nothing at all. The pot which had ridden him like the Old Man of the Sea would kill him. But he wanted to be rid of it. He did not want to be near it even in death. "Just get it off me!" he shouted. He was a little mad now.

**T**HE earth shook under him. Blast-waves beat at him. Half-deafened, sobbing, he crawled to the well. He pulled at the rotten boards. He hung his head over the noisesome depth. He used the metal-snips—he had trouble getting them under the chain-link strap—to chew at the soft metal. The earth trembled under concussions. Bits of loose earth and rotted wood tumbled into the well from its edges.

The snips met triumphantly. . . . The pot tumbled down into the well and floated for a moment, rocking. Then it tilted and filled and sank. A thin, scummy veil of bubbles arose. Some light metals react readily with water. Potassium violently, sodium freely, lithium readily. The pot was of an alloy which would be highly useful where it was permanently too cold for water ever to turn liquid. But on earth. . . .

Mr. Tedder sat up. He felt giddy; light-headed; incredibly relieved. But a shell fell thirty yards away, and a bomb exploded horribly just over the ridge, and something ripped through the half-collapsed house and exploded on beyond. There had been a devil in this woods. The devil of East Lupton, Vermont. The artillery searched for it, to exorcise it, but Mr. Tedder was not unconscious.

"It's gone!" he cried joyfully. "And I'm okay now."

It would never occur to him that designers of a weapon who planned for the tightening of a fastening-strap when it was turned on, so that it could not possibly make its own wearer a victim, would also arrange for it to be turned off if the fastening-strap should be broken or cut. It would be the most obvious of safety devices.

But Mr. Tedder's intellectual processes would never grasp such a thing. He simply knew that he was not unconscious and that the bombardment went on. It was overwhelming. It was maddening. Mr. Tedder

put his hands over his ears and wept, cringing to the earth and awaiting death.

Then the earth seemed to buckle beneath him. It raised up and dealt him a violent blow. Over where the frosted sphere lay self-buried in the ground, there was a sudden, incredible, impossible flare. A shell had hit the enigmatic globe in which an untended motor had run so long. The sphere exploded.

The violence of the explosion suggested power much greater than anything human. The fuel-store of the sphere must have detonated. It made a crater a quarter-mile across, and every least fragment of the sphere itself was atomized and destroyed.

The explosion seemed to the military to mark the death of something spectacular. They stopped the barrage and exploded.

They found Mr. Tedder unconscious. He was sleeping as if drugged, from reaction to the end of strain. Near him there was a caved-in well which, of course, was not worth digging out.

It was assumed that Mr. Tedder had remained unconscious through all the career of the Devil of East Lupton, Vermont. He was hospitalized, and kindly told what had happened, and ultimately turned loose with a new suit of clothes and a five-dollar bill. And Mr. Tedder disappeared into the vast obscurity of the world of tramps, bums, blanket-stiffs and itinerant workmen.

And to this day nobody pretends that they really understood anything about the Devil of East Lupton, Vermont. There are even marked differences of opinion concerning its ending. Mr. Tedder thinks he was the Devil, and that he somehow ceased to be fiendish when he got the pot off his head. Other authorities think that heavy ordnance destroyed the Devil, and point to a quarter-mile crater as proof.

But if by the Devil of East Lupton you mean the Whatever-it-was that came out of the somewhere into the here and caused all the catastrophes by his mere arrival. . . . Why, in that case, and strictly speaking, the Devil of East Lupton, Vermont was the Whatever-it-was which was in a leathery, hide-like garment or pressure-suit the morning Mr. Tedder ran away from the constable. And that Devil was destroyed by a rusty barb on a forgotten, vine-grown strand of barbed wire which was strung between two trees on an abandoned farm. And it was killed long before so much as the existence of a Devil in those parts was suspected.



**A SPACEWAYS  
NOVELET**

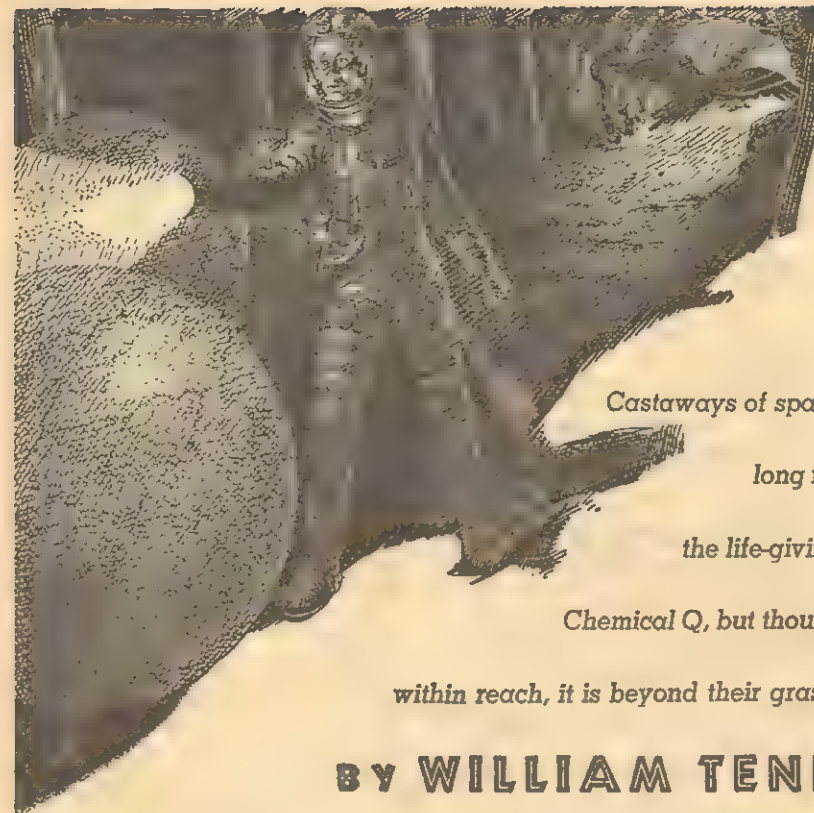
Dimly Donelli heard Helena utter  
a cry as he toppled forward



## A SPACEWAYS NOVELET

Dimly Donelli heard Helena utter  
a cry as he toppled forward

100



*Castaways of space*

*long for*

*the life-giving*

*Chemical Q, but though*

*within reach, it is beyond their grasp!*

**BY WILLIAM TENN**

### CHAPTER I

#### *Spaceship Survivors*

**T**HE tiny lifeboat seemed to hang suspended from its one working rear jet, then it side-slipped and began to spin violently downwards to the sickly orange ground of the planet.

Inside the narrow cabin, Dr. Helena Naxos was hurled away from the patient she was tending and slammed into a solid bulkhead. The shock jolted the breath out of her. She shook her head and grabbed frantically at an overhead support as the

cabin tilted again. Jake Donelli glared up from the viewscreen where the alien earth expanded at him and yelled across the control table:

"Great gravities, Blaine, soft jet! Soft jet before we're pulped!"

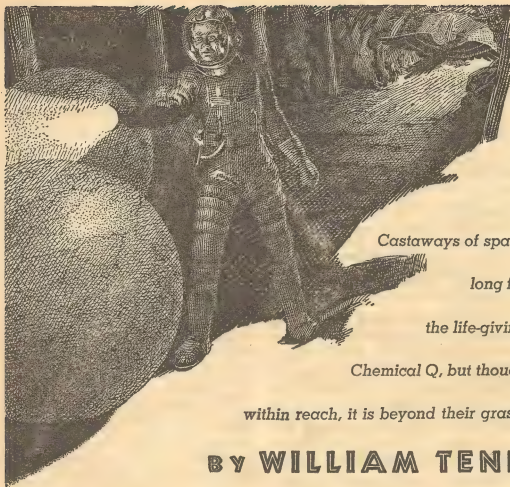
The tall, balding archaeologist of what had once been the First Deneb Expedition waved tremulous hands at the switches before him.

"Which—which button do you press?" he quavered. "I f-forget how y-you soften those forward things."

"You don't press any—oh, wait a minute."

# THE IONIAN CYCLE





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# THE IONIAN CYCLE

The spaceman tore the restraining straps away and bounded out of his seat. He seized the projecting edges of the table and made his way strainingly around it as the lifeboat spun faster in great swoops.

Dr. Archibald Blaine was squeezed against the back of his chair when Donelli reached him.

"I forgot the button," he mumbled.

"No button, doc. I told you. You jerk this toggle—like so. You haul this switch over—like so. Then you turn the little red wheel around twice. Does it. Whew! Now things are smoother!"

Donelli let go of the table as the forward softening jets caught on and straightened the vessel into a flat glide. He walked back to the main control bank, followed by Blaine and the woman biologist.

"The sea?" Helena Naxos asked at last, lifting her eyes from the view-screen. "That is the sea?"

"Nothing else but," Donelli told her. "We used up all but about a cupful of fuel trying to avoid falling into this system's sun—if you can call two planets a system! We're operating the cupful on the one main jet left unfused when the *Ionian Pinafore* blew up. Now we've overshot the continent and riding above the sea without a paddle. Good, huh? What'd he say the sea was made of?"

Dr. Douglas Ibn Yussuf propped himself on his uninjured elbow and called from his bunk:

"According to the spectroscopic tabulations you brought me an hour ago, the seas of this planet are almost pure hydrofluoric acid. There is a good deal of free fluorine in the atmosphere, although most of it is in the form of hydrofluoric acid vapor and similar combinations."

"Suppose you save some of that good news," Donelli suggested. "I know all about hydrofluoric acid being able to eat through almost anything and its grandmother. Tell me this: how long will the Grojen shielding on the hull stand up under it? An estimate, Doc."

WITH puckered brow, the Egyptian scientist considered. "If not replaced, say anywhere—oh, anywhere from five terrestrial days to a week. Not more."

"Fine!" the pale spaceman said happily. "We'll all be dead long before that." His eyes watched the view-screen.

"Not if we find fuel for the converter

and tanks," Blaine reminded him sternly. "And we know there's contra-Uranium on this world—a little, at any rate. The spectroscope showed it. That's why we headed here after the disaster."

"So we know there's fuel here—good old compact Q. Okay, if we landed on one of the continents maybe we'd have scratched a miracle on the chest and found some Q before the converter conked out. Then we could have repaired the other jets and tried to get back to a traffic lane, powered up the transmitter and radioed for help, done all sorts of nice things. But now that we're going to do our fall on the first island I see, what chance do you think we have?"

Blaine looked angrily at his two colleagues and then back at the small, squat spaceman with whom destiny and a defective storage tank aboard the *Ionian Pinafore* had thrown them.

"But that's ridiculous!" he said. "Landing on an island will reduce our chances of finding contra-Uranium from an improbability to an impossibility! It's rare enough in the universe, and after we've been fortunate enough to find a planet containing it, Jake, I demand—"

"You demand nothing, Doc," Donelli told him, showing belligerently up against his lean academic frame. "You demand nothing. Back on the expedition ship maybe the three of you were big-time operators with your degrees and all, and I was just Jake—broken from A.B. to Ordinary Spaceman for drunkenness when we lifted from Io. But here, I'm the only man-jack with a life-boat certificate and the laws of space put me in supreme command. Watch your language, doc: I don't like to be called Jake by the likes of you. You call me Donelli from here on in, and every once in a while, you call me Mr. Donelli."

There was a pause in the cabin while the archaeologist's cheeks puffed out and his frustrated eyes tried to pluck a reply from the overhead.

"Mr. Donelli," Helena Naxos called suddenly. "Would that be your island?" She gestured to the view-screen where an infinitesimal blot upon the sea was growing. She smoothed her black hair nervously.

Donelli stared hard. "Yeah. It'll do. Suppose you handle the forward jets—uh, Dr. Naxos. You saw me explaining them to Blaine. I wouldn't trust that guy with a falling baseball on Jupiter. I forgot which



button," he mimicked.

She took her place on the opposite side of the control table as Blaine, with tightened facial muscles, went over to Ibn Yussuf's bunk and whispered angrily to the injured man.

"You see," Donelli explained as he moved a lever a microscopic distance. "I don't want to hit an island any more than you folks do, Dr. Naxos. But we can't afford to use up any more fuel crossing an ocean as big as this. We may be able to make another continent, yes, but we'll have about fifteen minutes of breathing time left. This way, the converter should run for another two, three days giving us a chance to look around and maybe get some help from the natives."

"If there are any." She watched a dial needle throb hesitantly to a red mark. "We saw no cities on the telescaner. Although, as a biologist, I confess I'd like to investigate a creature with a fluorine respiration. By the way, Mr. Donelli, if you will allow me to call you Jake, you may call me Helena."

"Fair enough—hey, you watching that dial? Start softening jets. That's right. Now over to half. Hold it. Hold it! Here we go! Grab something everybody! Dr. Yussuf—lie flat—flat!"

He flipped the lever over all the way, slammed a switch shut and reached frantically for the two hand grips on the control table.

An emery wheel seemed to reach up and scrape the bottom of the hull. The emery wheel scraped harder and the whole ship groaned. The scrape spread along the entire bottom half of the life-boat, rose to an unbearably high scream in sympathy to which every molecule in their bodies trembled. Then it stopped and a vicious force snapped their bodies sideways.

**D**ONELLI unstrapped himself. "I've seen chief mates who did worse on the soft jets—Helena," was the comment. "So here we are on good old—What's the name of this planet, anyway?"

"Nothing, so far as I know." She hurried over to Dr. Ibn Yussuf who lay groaning in the cast which protected the ribs and arm broken in the first explosion of the *Ionian Pinafore*. "When we passed the system on our way to Deneb a week ago, Captain Hauberik named the sun Maximilian

—after the assistant secretary-general of the Terran Council? That would make this planet nothing more than Maximilian II, a small satellite of a very small star."

"What a deal," Donelli grumbled. "The last time I had to haul air out of a wreck, I found myself in the middle of the Antares-Solarian War. Now I get crazy in the head and ship out on an expedition to a part of space where humanity's just thinking of moving in. I pick a captain who's so busy buttering up to scientists and government officials that he doesn't bother to check storage tanks, let alone lifeboats. I haul air with three people—no offense, Helena—who can't tell a blast from the Hole in Cygnus and they get so cluttered up trying to seal the air-locks that, when the secondary explosion pops off from the ship, it catches us within range and blooies most of our jets and most of our O. Then, to top it off, I have to set down on a planet that isn't even on the maps and start looking for the quart or two of J that may be on the surface."

She eased the scientist's cast to a more comfortable position and chuckled.

"Sad, isn't it? But ours was the only boat that got away at that. We were lucky."

Donelli began climbing into a space-suit. "We weren't lucky," he disagreed. "We just happened to have a good spaceman aboard. Me. I'll scout around our island and see if I can find any characters to talk to. Our only hope is to get help from the folks here, if any. Sit tight till I get back and don't touch any equipment you don't understand."

"Want me to come with you—er, Donelli?" Dr. Blaine moved to the space-suit rack. "If you meet anything dangerous—"

"I'll make out better alone. I've got a supersonic in this suit. And Doc—you might forget which button. Great gravities!"

Shaking his helmeted head, Donelli started the air-lock machinery.

The orange ground was brittle underfoot, he found, and flaked off as he walked. Despite the yellow atmosphere, he could see the complete outline of the island from the hill near the ship. It was a small enough patch of ground pointing reluctantly out of an irritated sea of hydrofluoric acid.

Most of it was bare, little dots of black moss breaking the heaving monotony of orange. Between the ship and the sea was a grove of larger vegetation: great purple

flowers on vivid scarlet stems that held them a trembling thirty feet in the stagnant air.

Interesting, but not as interesting as fuel.

He had noticed a small cave yawning in the side of the hill when he climbed it. Sliding down, now, he observed its lower lip was a good bit from the ground. He started to enter, checked himself abruptly.

There was something moving inside.

With his metal-sheathed finger, he clicked on the searchlight imbedded in his helmet and with the other hand, he tugged the supersonic pistol from its clamps in the side of his suit and waited for its automatic adjustment to the atmosphere of the planet. At last it throbbed slightly and he knew it was in working condition.

They needed favors from the inhabitants and he didn't intend to do any careless dying, either.

Just inside the cave entrance the beam of his light showed a score of tiny maggot-like creatures crawling and feeding upon two thin blankets of flesh. Whatever the animals they were eating had been, they were no longer recognizable.

Donelli stared at the small white worms. "If you're intelligent, I might as well give up. I have an idea we can't be friends. Or am I prejudiced?"

Since they ignored both him and his question, he moved on into the cave. A clacking sound in his headphones brought him to a halt again, squeezing a bubbling elation back into his heart.

Could it be? So early and so easy? He drew the screen away from the built-in Geiger on his chest. The clacking grew louder. He turned slowly until the flashlight on his head revealed a half dozen microscopic crystals floating a few inches from one wall.

Contra-Uranium! The most compact, super-fuel discovered by a galactic-exploring humanity, a fuel that required no refining since, by its very nature, it could occur only in the pure state. It was a fuel for whose powerful uses every engine and atomic converter on every spaceship built in the past sixty years had been designed.

But six crystals weren't very much. The lifeboat might barely manage a take-off on that much Q, later to fall into the hydrofluoric sea.

"Still," Donelli soliloquized, "it's right heartening to find some so near the surface.

I'll get an inerted lead container from the ship and scoop it up. But maybe those crystals have a family further back."

The crystals didn't, but someone or something else did.

Four large, chest-high balls of green, veined thickly with black and pink lines, throbbed upon the ground at the rear of the cave. Eggs? If not eggs, what were they?

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## CHAPTER II

### *Weird Beings*

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**D**ONELLI skirted them warily, even though he saw no opening in any of them. They were anchored to the ground, but they were unlike any plants he had seen in nine years of planet-jumping. They looked harmless, but—

"Well, grow me tentacles and call me a Sagittarian!"

The back of the cave divided into two tunnels which were higher and wider than their parent hollow. Smooth all around, Donelli might have taken them for the burrows of an immense worm, had he not noticed the regularly-spaced wood-like beams crossed upon each other at intervals in both shafts. The tunnels extended a good distance ahead, then curved sharply down and away from each other.

This was mining, this was engineering! Primitive, but effective!

Donelli hated to use up power in his helmet-transmitter, but he might run into trouble and it was essential that the three scientists learn of even the small amount of Q in the cave. After all, the creatures who built these tunnels might not know enough chemistry to appreciate his ineditability before they sampled him.

He turned on his headset. "Donelli to ship! Good news: I've found enough Q to keep us breathing until *after* this atmosphere burns through our Grojen shielding. We'll be able to sit around in our space suits for at least three days after the ship is eaten out from under us. Nice? You'll see the crystals about halfway into the cave. And don't forget to use an inerted lead container when you pick them up."

"Where are you going, Jake?" He recognized Helena's voice.

"Couple of tunnels at the rear of the cave here have regulation cross-supports. That's why we didn't see any cities when we came down. The smart babies on this world live underground. I'm going to try to talk them into a reciprocal trade treaty—if we have anything they want to reciprocate with."

"Wait a minute, Donelli," Blaine shouted breathlessly. "If you meet any intelligent aliens, it's more than possible they won't understand Universal Gesture-Diagram. This is an unexplored fluorine-breathing world. I'm an experienced archaeologist and I'll be able to communicate with them. Let me join you."

Donelli hesitated. Blaine was smart, but he sometimes fumbled.

Helena came back on. "I'd suggest you take him up on it," her steady voice said. "Archibald Blaine may get switches confused with buttons, but he's one of the few men in the galaxy who knows all nine of Ogilvie's Basic Language-Patterns. If these miners of yours don't respond to an Ogilvie Pattern—well, they just don't belong in our universe!"

As Donelli still hesitated, she developed her point. "Look Jake, you're our commander and we accept your orders because you know how to cuddle a control board and we don't. But a good commander should use his personnel correctly and, when it comes to dealing with unknown extra-terrestrials, Blaine and I have training that you've been too busy to acquire. You're a spaceman; we're scientists. We'll help you get your Q, then we'll take orders from you on how to use it."

A pause. "All right, Blaine. I'll be moving up the righthand tunnel. And Helena—see that his space suit is all buttoned up before he leaves the ship? He can catch an awful cold in that yellow air."

The squat, pale spacehand took a firm grip on his sound pistol and walked delicately into the shaft. The ground here was of a firmer consistency than that on the surface: it supported his weight without either chipping or sagging. That was good. Nothing could come at him through the walls without his detecting it first.

He ducked under a cross-beam, his light momentarily pointing down. When he straightened again, he saw he had company.

At the far end of the tunnel, where it slanted down, several long, segmented beings were moving slowly toward him. There

was only the faintest rustle in his headphones as they approached.

Donelli noticed with relief that only one of them had a weapon, a crude hand-ax without a handle. Come to think of it, though, an ax-head thrust forcefully might penetrate not his suit but—what was more dangerous—the Grojen shielding, leaving the metal exposed to the corrosive atmosphere. Not so good. But they didn't seem hostile.

AS THEY arrived within a few feet of him, their speed decreased almost to immobility but their three pairs of three-clawed limbs pushed them to his side. Then they stopped, and the long thin hairy appendage on their heads brushed against his suit inquiringly and without fear. Their toothless mouths opened and made low gobbling sounds to each other.

They evidently had a language. Donelli saw the flat membrane on their backs that was obviously an ear, but he looked in vain for eyes. Of course, living underground in darkness, they were blind. A fat lot of help Universal Gesture-Diagram would be, even if they could understand it.

Something about the sectioned length of the bodies stretching behind them, something about their rich ivory color, was familiar. Donelli's mind tugged at his memory.

A terrific crash sounded in his ear phones. The three burrowers stiffened around him. Donelli turned and swore.

Blaine had entered the tunnel and smashed into one of the cross-beams. He was stepping over the fallen log now. His space suit seemed undented, but his self-confidence had not fared so well. Also a little bubble of earth formed over the area which had rested on the beam end.

The natives had rubbed their head filament upon the ground as if examining its intentions. Now, before Donelli could get started, they scampered down the tunnel toward the fallen support. Working in perfect coordination, without any apparent orders, they quickly lifted and inserted it in its former position. Then they began brushing against Blaine.

"Deep space, Doc," Donelli moaned as he came up.

"Sh-h-h—quiet!" The archaeologist had bent over the nearest burrower and was clicking his metal-enclosed fingers in an odd rhythm over its ear patch. The animal

curved away for a moment, then began a low, hesitant gobbling to the same rhythm as the finger-clicks.

"Can—can you talk to it?" Donelli found it difficult to see the old man as anything but a doddering ineffectual.

"Ogilvie Pattern Five. Knew it. *Knew* it! Those three-clawed feet and the sharp curve of the ax. Like to investigate the material of the ax—noticed the pointed tip right off. Had to be an Ogilvie Five language. Can I talk to it? Of course! Just need a minute or two to establish the facets of the pattern."

The spaceman's respect for the academic life grew rapidly as he saw the other two aliens edge under the metallic hand and commence gobbling in turn.

They were joining the conversation, or the attempt at one.

Blaine began to stroke the side of one of the creatures with his other hand. The gobbling acquired a note of surprise, became staccato.

"Amazing!" Blaine said after a while. "They mine everything, and completely refuse to discuss the existence of surface phenomena. Most unusual, even for an Ogilvie Five. Do you know where they get their supporting beams? From the roots of plants. At least, that's what they seem to be from their description. But—and this is what the Galactic Archaeological Society will consider significant—they cannot seem to grasp the concept of plant blossoms. They know only of the roots and the base of the stem. Their social life, now, is strangely obscure for so elementary a culture. But perhaps it might better be termed simple? Consider the facts—"

"You consider them," Donelli invited. "I'm thinking of the Q we need. All this space-suit power drain is cutting so many hours off our total breathing time. Find out what they'd consider a good trade and ask them to move up into the cave ahead so that I can show them what contra-Uranium looks like. We'll supply them with inerted lead containers for picking up the stuff. How far do their tunnels run?"

"All around the planet, I gather. Under the sea and under the continents in a crossing, branching network. I don't anticipate any difficulty. Being the dominant intelligent life-form of the planet, and not particularly carnivorous, they're really quite friendly."

BLAINE'S fingers clicked questioningly at the nearest alien and he stroked its side with short and long rolls of his hand. The creature seemed confused and gobbled to its companions. Then it moved back. Blaine clicked and stroked once more.

"What's the matter, doc? They look angry now."

"My suggestion of the cave. It's evidently under the strongest of taboos. These are barbarians, you understand, just emerging into a religious culture-matrix, and a powerful taboo takes precedence over instinct. Then, too, living in the tunnels, they are probably agoraphobic—"

"Look out! They're trying to pull some fancy stuff!"

One of the aliens had scuttled under Blaine's feet. The archaeologist tottered, crashed to the ground. The other two burrowers grasped his long arms between their claws. Blaine struggled and rolled desperately, looking like a confused elephant attacked by jackals.

"Donelli," he gasped, "I can't talk to them while they're holding my arms. They're—they're carrying me!"

The pair of burrowers were dragging the old man's body down the tunnel with gentle but insistent tugs. "Don't worry, doc. They won't get by me. That must have been one powerful taboo you broke when you mentioned the cave."

As Donelli advanced to meet the group, the alien who had upset the archaeologist scurried ahead to confront him. A forward claw held the small ax-head well back for a thrust.

"Look, fella," Donelli said placatingly. "We don't want any trouble with you, but we aren't carrying too much power right now and the doc's suit would run down in no time if you took him any deeper. Now why don't you act business-like and let us show you what we need?"

He knew his words carried no meaning in themselves, but he had had enough experience of unusual organisms to know that a gentle attitude frequently carried the conviction of its gentleness.

Not here, though. The claw snapped forward suddenly and the ax-head spun toward his visored face with unexpected velocity. Donelli jerked his head to one side and felt the pointed tip of the weapon scratch the side of his helmet. The slight buzzing in his right ear was replaced by an

empty roaring: that meant the ear phone had gone dead, which in turn meant the Grojen shielding had been chipped off leaving the hydrofluoric vapors free to eat through the metal.

"This is no good. I guess I'll have to—" The burrower had retrieved the ax in a lightning scamper and had it poised for another throw. As Donelli brought his supersonic up, he marveled at the creature's excellent aim despite its lack of vision. That long, hairy filament waving from the top of its head evidently served to locate his movements better than the finest radarplex on the latest space ships.

Just before he blasted, he managed to slip the intensity rod on the top of the tube down to non-lethal pitch. The directional beam of high-frequency sound tore down at the burrower and caught it with the claw coming around again. It stopped in mid-throw, stumbled backwards, and finally collapsed into unconsciousness upon the orange ground. The ax-head rolled out of its opened claw.

Blaine protested with a grunt as he was dropped by the other two. They ran up to the fallen burrower and edged around his body insistently. Donelli held his supersonic ready for further developments.

What happened took him completely by surprise.

**I**N A SERIES of movements so rapid that he could hardly follow it visually, one of the aliens snatched up the ax-head while the other lifted the creature Donelli had blasted to its back. They rolled up the slope of the tunnel and scurried past him on either side, the fluorine atmosphere almost crackling with their passage. By the time the spaceman had whirled, they were gone down the far end of the shaft where it dipped into the interior of the planet.

"They sure can hurry when they feel they have to," Donelli commented as he helped the older man to his feet. "Which is what I have to do if I want to get back to the ship before I start sneezing hydrofluoric acid."

While they sped as rapidly as the heavy suits would permit up the tunnel and through the cave, Blaine wheezed an explanation: "They were quite friendly until I mentioned the cave. There seems to be so much sacredness connected with it in their minds that my mere invitation to go

there reduced me from an object of great interest to one of the most abysmal disgust. They were indifferent to any wants of ours in reference to the place. Any suggestion of taking them along is enough to precipitate a violent attack."

Donelli wondered if he were imagining the smarting sensation in his eyes. Had fluorine started to seep in already? Fortunately, they were at the mouth of the cave.

"Not so nice," he said. "The Q around here isn't enough to make our ship give out with a healthy cough, and we'll need their help to get any more. But we can't tell them what we want unless they go to the cave with us. Besides, after this fracas, they may be a trifle hard to meet. Why were they carrying you away?"

"To sacrifice me to some primitive diety as a placative measure, possibly. Remember they are in the early stages of barbarism. The only reason we weren't attacked immediately is because they are easily the dominant life-form of this world and are confident of their ability to cope with strange creatures. Then again, they might have wanted to investigate me—to dissect me—to examine my potentialities as food."

They rang the air-lock signal and clambered in.

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## CHAPTER III

### *Race Against Time*

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**H**ASTILY Donelli stripped off his space suit. There was a thin scar on the metal of the helmet where the Grojen shielding had been scratched away and HF vapor eaten in. A little longer out there and he would have been doomed!

"Hullo!" For the first time, he noticed that almost one-third of the cabin was taken up by a great transparent cage, one corner of which was occupied by a relaxed red creature with folded black wings. "When did the vampire kid arrive?"

"Ten minutes ago," Helena Naxos replied. She was adjusting a temperature-pressure gauge at the side of the cage. "And he—she—it didn't arrive: I carried it inside. After Dr. Blaine left, I went over the island with the telescanner and noticed this thing flying in from the sea. It went right to



those purple flowers and began cutting off sections of the petals and putting them in a sort of glider made out of vines and branches that it was towing. The things obviously cultivate vegetation. That patch out there is one of their gardens."

"Imagine!" the archaeologist breathed. "Another civilization in embryo—avian this time. An avian culture would hardly build cities. But this is a culture where the glider comes before the wheel."

"So you put on a space suit and went out to get it." Donelli shook his head. "You shouldn't have done that, Helena. That creature might have packed a wallop."

"Yes, I considered the possibility. But I didn't know if you two were going to hit anything important, and this winged thing looked as if it might prove to be a link between us and this world. Its ability to fly, in particular, while we are grounded could prove valuable. It was fairly quiet when I approached, neither scared nor angry, so I tried the little Ogilvie I know—pattern one. Didn't work."

"Of course not," Dr. Blaine told her positively. "This is obviously Ogilvie Language-Pattern Three. Consider the hinged wings, the primitive glider you mentioned, the husbandry of flowers. It has to be an Ogilvie Three."

"Well, I didn't know that, Dr. Blaine. And it wouldn't have helped me much if I had. Ogilvie is a little too rich for a poor female biologist's blood. At any rate, after communication broke down—or never got started—this thing ignored me and prepared to fly away with its loaded glider. I squeezed some supersonic at it—low-power of course, brought it down and came in to ask Dr. Ibn Yussuf's advice on how to build a compartment that would permit us to keep it in the ship without killing it by oxygen poisoning."

"Must have used up an awful lot of Q, Helena! I notice you have pretty elaborate temperature and pressure controls as well as HF humidifiers and in-grav studs. And that loud-speaker system is wasteful."

Dr. Ibn Yussuf groaned up in his bunk and called across the cabin. "It does reduce our supply of contra-Uranium to the danger point, Donelli, but, under the circumstances, we thought we were justified. Our only hope is to get aid from the inhabitants of this planet, and we can't get aid unless we can hold them long enough to explain our

position and wants to them."

"You have something there," Donelli admitted. "I should have made a stab at bringing back one of those specimens we ran into, not that it would have done much good from the way they acted. Hope you have more luck with this avian character. Treat him—her—it lovingly for he—she—it's our last chance."

Then he and Blaine told her about the burrowers.

"I wish I had been with you," she exclaimed. "Think of it: two barbaric civilizations—one on the surface and the other in the tunnels—developing in complete unconsciousness of each other on the same planet! The burrowers know nothing of the avians, do they Dr. Blaine?"

"Absolutely nothing. They even refuse to discuss the matter. Surface life is a completely alien concept to them. Their agoraphobia—fear of open places—probably has much to do with their reluctance to accompany us to the cave or even the tunnel entrance. Agoraphobia—*H-m-m-m*. Then these winged creatures might well be claustrophobic! That would be a catastrophe! We'll find out in a moment. It's opening its eyes. Where is that loud-speaker arrangement?"

Helena moved competently to the microphone and tucked a lever past several calibrations. "You may know its Ogilvie Pattern, doctor, but it takes a biologist to give the sound frequency at which it can hear best!"

**A**S BLAINE began experimental dronings and buzzings into the instrument, the creature inside the transparent cage opened its wings in a series of hinged movements and revealed the whole rich redness of its small body. It crawled under the loud-speaker and spread open a mouth that was slit up and down instead of sideways. The black wings beat slowly as it gained interest, reflecting cheerful yellow streaks in their furrows. The two tentacles under its jaw lost their stiffness and undulated in mounting excitement.

This would take some time. Donelli walked to the telescanner and faced Dr. Douglas Ibn Yussuf.

"Suppose we get this fellow to cooperate. Where's a good place to tell it to look for Q?"

The chemist lay back and considered. "You are familiar with Quentin's theory of

our galaxy's origin? That once there were two immense stars which collided—one *terrene*, the other *contra-terrene*? That the force of their explosion ripped the essence of space itself and filled it with ricocheting *terrene* and *contra-terrene* particles whose recurring violence warped matter out of space to form a galaxy? According to Quentín, the resulting galaxy was composed of *terrene* stars who are touched every once in a while by *contra-terrene* particles and go nova. The only exception is *contra-Uranium*, the opposite number of the last element in the *normal* periodic table, which will not explode as long as it is isolated from the heavy elements near its opposite number on the table. Thus in a *fluorine* atmosphere, with a *bromide* soil and—

"Look, Doc," Donelli said wearily. "I learned all that in School years ago. Next you'll be telling me that it's thousands of times more powerful than ordinary atomic fuels because of its explosive *contra-terrene* nature. Why is it that you scientists have to discuss the history of the universe before you give a guy an answer to a simple question even in a crisis like this?"

"Sorry, son. It's difficult to break the habits of an academic lifetime, even in times of a deadly emergency. That's your advantage: you're accustomed to operate against time, while we like to explore a problem thoroughly before attempting a mere hypothesis. Science is a caution-engendering discipline, you see, and—

"All right. I won't digress into a discussion of the scientific attitude. Where would you find *contra-Uranium* on a planet that's been shown to possess it? Near the surface, I'd say, where the lighter elements abound. You've already found some in a cave on this island? That would indicate that it was forced explosively to the surface, the only place it could exist, when the planet was in a formative state. If there is other *contra-Uranium* on this world, there must be other caves like the one here."

Donelli waved him to silence and bent over the telescanner. "Good enough. Deep space and suppressed novae, Doc. That was all I wanted to know! Now I'll see how much I can find out before I use up the dregs of our power."

He swept the beam across the sickly sea and up the coast-line of the continent until he saw a dark spot in the orange ground. Then, nudging the telebeam into the cave, he saw

at last the few shimmering crystals that meant precious *Q*. He tried other apertures here and there, convincing himself that, while there was little enough in any one cave, the planet as a whole possessed more than they required. The sight of all the unobtainable *Q* on the telescanner screen made Donelli sweat with exasperation.

He made another discovery. Leading down, in the rear of every cave was at least one tunnel that denoted the presence of the burrowers.

"If only we could have made them understand," Donelli murmured. "All of our problems now would have been orbital ones."

He rose and turned to see how his shipmates were doing with the winged alien. "Great gravities, what did you *do* to it?"

The avian was back in a corner of the *fluorine*-filled compartment, its hinged black wings completely screening its body from sight. The wings pressed down harshly as if the creature were attempting to shroud itself out of its environment.

DR. ARCHIBALD BLAINE, his hands cupped over the microphone, was *chuk-chuking* urgently, droning repetitiously, humming desperately. No apparent effect. The black wings squeezed tighter into the corner. A fearful, muffled gulping came over the loud-speaker in the wall.

"It was the mention of the cave, again," Helena Naxos explained, her pleasant face betraying worry. "We were doing fine, going from 'howd'yedo's' to 'how'veyeebeen's'—the girlie was beginning to tell us all about her complicated love-life—when Dr. Blaine asked if she had ever been inside the cave. Period. She crawled away and started to make like the cover of a hole."

"They can't do this to us!" Donelli yelled. "This planet is practically crawling with *Q* which we can't get because we don't have the *Q* to cross a hydrofluoric acid sea. The only way we can get it is for these babies to haul it over, either underground through tunnels or across the sea. And every time Blaine starts talking about the caves where the *Q* is lying around, they go neurotic on him. What's the *matter* with the caves? Why don't they like them? I like the caves!"

"Take it easy, Jake," Helena soothed. "We're up against a basic taboo in two separated cultures. There must be a reason for it. Find the reason and the problem is solved."

"I know. But if we don't find it soon we'll be nothing but fancy fluorine compounds."

The woman returned to Dr. Blaine. "Is it possible you could reawaken her interest by offering some gift? A superior glider, for example, or power-driven flight."

"I'm working on it," he replied testily, withdrawing his mouth from the microphone. "To creatures on the threshold of civilization, however, superstition takes precedence over mechanical innovations. If it's *only* superstition—that's another thing we don't know. Could it be the contra-Uranium crystals they're afraid of?"

Dr. Ibn Yussuf raised himself on his sound arm. "That is doubtful. Their chemical composition contains no elements heavier than barium, according to the spectroscope. Thus no contra-atomic chain reaction would be set off by their bodies coming in contact with the crystals. Perhaps the mere existence of the crystals upsets them."

Blaine frowned. "No. Unlikely. There would have to be a factor intimately related to them in some way. If I could only attract her attention! No matter what I say, she just lies there and gurgles." He went back to his urgent buzzing, frantically using a life-time of archaeological knowledge.

Donelli looked at the fuel indicators. His lips flattened into a grimace.

"I'll have to go out there and pick up those Q particles in the cave. That cage you built may make that avian comfortable, but it sure drained us dry."

"Wait, I'll go with you," Helena suggested. "Maybe I can discover what makes these fearsome caves so fearsome."

She donned a space suit. Donelli, after a rueful glance at his corroded helmet, dragged another metallic garment out of the locker and used its headpiece instead. They both inspected their supersuits carefully. He approved her casual efficiency.

"You know," her voice said into his headphones as they trudged toward the hill, "if Dr. Blaine is able to talk some sense into that creature and we manage to jet to a regular traffic lane and get rescued, he'll make quite a smash before the Galactic Archaeological Society with his two coexisting but unrelated civilizations. I'll get some fair notice myself with the little I've been able to deduce about these creatures biologically without resorting to dissection. Even Ibn Yussuf, bed-ridden as he is, has been doing

some heavy thinking on the chemistry of a bromide soil. And you—well, I imagine you want to get back to a place where you can hurry up and get drunk."

"No."

Her helmet turned toward him in surprise and question.

"No," he continued. "If we get out of this, I'm going to take advantage of the lifeboat law. Heard of it?"

She hadn't. Her eyes glowed intently behind his visor.

"The lifeboat law's one of the oldest in space. Any spaceman—Able or Ordinary—who, under a given set of circumstances, is entitled to assume command of a vessel and successfully brings that vessel to safety may, at his written request, be issued the license of a third officer. It's called the lifeboat law because that's what it usually pertains to. I have the experience. All I need is the ticket."

"Oh. And what would you do as a third officer? Get drunk whenever you left Io?"

"No, I wouldn't. It's hard to explain—maybe you can't understand—but as a third mate, I wouldn't get drunk. An A. B. or an ordinary spaceman, now, there's so much tiresome, unimportant work facing you whenever you leave a port that you just have to get drunk. And the longer you've been in space, the drunker you get. As a third mate, I wouldn't drink at all—except maybe on vacations. As a third mate, I'd be the driest, stiffest guy who ever was poisoned by a second cook. I'd be a terror of a third mate, because that's the way things are."

"Look at that!" Helena had paused with her back to the mouth of the cave.

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## CHAPTER IV

### *Primitive War*

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**J**AKE DONELLI turned and looked back at the ship. Across it, in the grove of fleshy purple flowers, were at least a dozen winged creatures like the one Blaine was attempting to interest in conversation. Far over the sea, were many dots that grew larger and resolved into even more of the avians. Some of them towed gliders lightly behind them. Others carried light tubes. Blow-guns?

"Wonder how they knew about Susie," the spaceman mused. "Was it because she didn't come back at the usual time that the posse was organized? Or are they telepathic?"

"A combination, possibly. They certainly seem to know when one of them is in trouble. You wouldn't say they're acting belligerent?"

"Nope. Just flexing what passes for their muscles. They don't know whether we intend to serve Susie fricassed or boiled in her *huc jacet*. Better duck inside."

The biologist became her crisp self the moment she saw the white worms. "Wish I could tell exactly what it is they're eating. Now suppose I make a loose guess. Yes, it could well be. Jake, where are those other eggs?"

"Other eggs? Back there. Funny kind of eggs."

She slipped ahead of him, her searchlight picking out the chest-high globules. With a muttered exclamation, she bent down and examined one closely. It was slowly splitting along a pink vein. Donelli waited hopefully.

"No." She straightened. "It doesn't add up. Even assuming, as would seem possible, that those small creatures in the front are the live young of the burrowers and these are the eggs of the avians, it still doesn't explain their relative distance from the usual habitat of their parents. If they were the young of each species, the positions should be reversed. With their strong taboos and respective phobias, the avians would not fly so far into the cave, and the burrowers would not crawl so close to the surface. Furthermore, they would inevitably have passed each other at some time and know of each other's existence. Then too, while birth taboos are common among all primitive races, they hardly have the force of the psychoses which seem to affect both species relative to this and other caves. I'd need a good deal of study and many, many careful notes to work this problem out."

"Continuum!" he swore. "This isn't a research paper for some scientific society or other. We're in a hurry. This is a matter of life and death, woman! Can't you put some pressure into your thinking?"

She threw up her arms in their ungainly wrappings helplessly. "I'm sorry, Jake. I'm trying hard, but I just don't have enough facts on which to base an analysis of two

separate unfamiliar societies. I'm not a sociologist; I'm a biologist. So far as these creatures are concerned, I've just reached the threshold."

"That's all we do—stand around on the threshold," Donelli muttered. "Here are these caves, the threshold to our survival if we can get these babies to pick up the Q and bring it to us. The avians fly around the threshold in the underground but won't go in, while the burrowers crawl around the threshold to the surface but won't go further if you gave them the place."

"And both races are on the threshold to civilization. I wonder how long they have been there?"

The spaceman slung the inerted lead container to the ground, preparatory to catching up the crystals of contra-Uranium.

"What's the matter with them anyway that they're so afraid of the caves? What do they think will happen to them after they cross the threshold?"

"What — do — they — think — will — happen," Helena repeated slowly. "What are we all afraid of, the fear intrinsic to any living animal? But how—the eggs—why, of course! *Of course!*"

She bent toward him briefly and Donelli felt his helmet clang.

"Sorry," she said. "I forgot. I tried to kiss you. What beautiful reasoning, Jake!"

"Huh?" He felt absurdly clumsy in his ignorance—and guilty.

"I'll have to work the details out as I go. Dr. Blaine—once I give him your premise—he'll be able to help. Isn't it wonderful how removal of one stone from the pyramid of obscurity sends the whole structure tumbling down? Now, Jake, do you think you could go into those tunnels and fetch me a live but slightly stunned burrower? We'll need one, you know."

"I—I guess I can. Where do you want him?"

"It, Jake, *it!* Bring it right here to the middle of the cave. I'll be waiting for you. Hurry!"

**S**HE RAN out of the cave toward the ship. Donelli watched her go, decided he couldn't recall any particularly clever remarks he had made, set his supersonic for its lowest frequency and moved to the tunnels.

He paused before the intersection. He and Blaine had had their little scrap with the

burrowers in the right-hand one, and an elaborate trap might have been set there against their return: accordingly he chose to walk down the shaft on his left.

It was much like the other shaft. Carefully carved cross-beams were set up at intervals, while the sides were smooth and round. He came to the sharp slope and moved more cautiously. If he slipped into a hole, there was no telling how far he might fall.

The slope became steeper. Donelli's helmet light suddenly exposed another, more complicated intersection ahead in the form of six tunnel entrances. In front of one, two burrowers were chipping the end of a large root out of the tunnel ceiling.

As his search beam hit them, they whirled simultaneously and waved the hairy appendage at him for the barest fraction of a second. Then, both sprang for the tunnel entrance in a flicker of ivory bodies.

Donelli thought he had missed. He had brought up his weapon just as they leaped. But one fell to the floor, the ax-head dropping. The creature was not completely unconscious, gobbling weakly at him as he approached. Donelli slung it over his shoulder and started back. The creature squirmed limply in his grasp.

There was an odd, insistent patter behind him, a sound of many legs. Pursuit. Well, they wouldn't dare follow him into the cave. He wished the suit weren't so heavy, though. He kept turning his head to look at the empty shaft to the rear. Nasty to be overcome from behind, under the suffocating earth of an alien planet.

Even though the burrower stiffened with fear when he reached the cave, he felt better. The pattering grew louder, stopped, came on slowly.

Helena Naxos and Blaine were squatting near the four large veined balls, the avian, weakly fluttering, between them. They held a supersonic over it. The winged creature had evidently had a dose of sound like that of Donelli's captive. Blaine was speaking persuasively, in that hum-drone language, with little apparent effect.

"Put it right down here, next to the other one," Helena ordered. "With a little time and a little imagination, we may get out of this fix. Too early to tell just yet. Jake, you'll have to act as sort of armed guard at this conference. We mustn't be disturbed. Susie's playmates are too frightened to come in, but they've been making all kinds of fuss

since we carried her out of the ship and into the cave."

"I'll take care of it," the spaceman promised.

He gasped with sheer astonishment when he reached the entrance of the cave. The saffron sky was obscured by multitudes of black winged avians dipping in short angry circles. A swarm of the avians had surrounded the lifeboat and, as he watched, they lifted it slightly off the ground in the direction of the sea. This was no attempt to placate a deity, he decided, but sheer vindictiveness—revenge for the unspeakable tortures they imagined the humans were venting on the prisoner.

The supersonic low-power beam rolled them off the ship in a huge stunned mass. Their places were immediately taken by others. Donelli sprayed them off too.

They left the ship alone after that, and came in flying low at him with their blow tubes in their mouths. Jagged darts shrilled nastily all around him. He felt one bounce off his chest and hoped vaguely that they were less effective than the weapons of the burrowers on Grojen shielding. He moved back into the shadow of the cave.

Helena, Dr. Blaine and the two aliens came up behind him and gathered round the white worms near the entrance.

"Pretty dangerous here," he told them. "These avians of yours are an accurate bunch of snipers."

"No help for it," she replied. "We're getting close. I don't think they'll keep blowing darts after they get a glimpse of Sister Susie. We'll be safe so long as we're near her. Suppose you do something about the other side. Those burrowers are throwing an awful lot of stuff awfully far."

**H**E MOVED past them toward the rear, noting that both the winged and clawed creature were no longer under the influence of the supersonics but were listening intently to Dr. Blaine as he alternately hummed at one and clicked at the other. They almost watched Helena gesture to the white worms and their grisly meal and back to them.

At least we've got their interest, Donelli thought grimly.

He began to cough. No mistake this time, there was HF vapor seeping into his suit through some scratch. Fluorine was eating at his lungs. Well, he didn't have time to



feel sick.

The ivory-colored animals had rigged up a primitive ballista just a few feet from the end of the tunnel and were pegging axheads into the cave at fairly respectable velocities. The missiles were easy to side-step; but Donelli's head was getting heavy and he lost his footing once or twice. As fast as his supersonic would sweep them away from the ballista, they would crowd back again with stubborn determination. A slow, evil fire built itself in Donelli's chest and spread nibbling fingers along his throat.

He looked over his shoulder. No more darts were coming in at the rapt group near the cave mouth. Evidently the avians were possessed of more love for one of their number than the burrowers. He had just started to turn his head, when a heavy object struck the back of his helmet. He dimly perceived he was falling. It seemed to him that the burrower which he had captured leaped over him and rejoined its fellows, and that Susie flew out to a clustered bunch of avians and that they all buzzed and hummed like idiots.

What a waste of time, he thought as the fire began to consume his brain. Helena let them go.

It seemed to him that Helena and Dr. Blaine were hurrying to his side through a shimmering mist of yellow agony. It also seemed to him that one of the chest-high balls split up along a pink vein and something came out.

But he was sure of nothing, but the painful, choking darkness into which his body twisted, nothing but the agony in his chest. . . .

He woke with a spaceman's certain knowledge of riding a smooth jet. His body felt deliciously light. He tried to sit up, but he was too weak to do more than turn his head. Two men had their backs to him. After a while he identified them as Dr. Archibald Blaine and Dr. Douglas Ibn Yussuf. Dr. Yussuf was out of his cast and was arguing in an animated fashion with Blaine over a white ax-headed imprisoned in a plastic block.

"Why, I'm in Dr. Yussuf's bunk," Donelli muttered stupidly.

"Welcome back," Helena told him, moving into range of his watery eyes. "You've been pretty far away for a long, long time."

"Away?"

"You ate enough hydrofluoric acid to etch a glass factory out of existence. I made my biological education turn handspings to

save that belligerent life of yours. We used up almost every drug on the ship and Dr. Yussuf's organic deconverter-and-respirator, which he built and used on you, is going to make him the first physical chemist to win a Solarian Prize in medicine."

"When—when did we take off?"

"Days ago. We should be near a traffic lane now, not to mention the galactic patrol. Our tanks are stuffed with contra-Uranium, our second jet is operating in a clumsy sort of way and our converter is functioning as cheerily as any atomic converter ever did. After the help we gave them with their own lives, the population of Maximilian II was so busy bringing us Q that we ran out of inerted lead containers. From considering us the personifications of death, they've come to the point where they believe humans go around destroying death, or at least its fear. And it's Jake Donelli who did that."

"I did, did I?" Donelli was being very cautious.

"Didn't you? That business about the threshold of life and death being the caves was what I heard you develop with my own ears. It was the only clue I needed. The caves related not only to the sacredness of birth, but—more important to the primitive mind—to the awful terror of death. A threshold, you called it. And so it was, not only between life and death, but between the burrowers and the avians. Once I had that, and with a little scientific guessing, it was simple to figure out why the eggs were laid in apparent reverse order—that of the burrowers near the front, and that of the avians at the rear—and why they had never met each other."

**T**HE spaceman thought that over and then nodded slowly.

"Simple," Donelli murmured. "Yes, that might be the word. This little shred of scientific guessing you did, just what did it amount to?"

"Why, that the avians and the burrowers were different forms of the same creature in different stages of the life-process. The winged creatures mate just as their powers start to decline. Before the young hatch, the parents seek out a cave and die there. The young, those white worms, use the parental bodies as food until they have grown claws and can travel down to the tunnels where they become adolescent burrowers.

"The burrowers, after all, are nothing but

larva—despite the timbering of their shafts and their mining techniques which Drs. Blaine and Yussuf consider spectacular. They can be considered sexless. After several years, the burrower will return to the cave. In the belief of its fellows it dies there, since it returns no more. It spins a cocoon—that's what those large green balls were—and remains a chrysalis until the winged form is fully developed. It then flies out of the cave and into the open air where it is accepted by the so-called avians as their junior. It evidently retains no memory of its pre-chrysalis existence.

"Thus you have two civilizations unaware of each other, each different and each proceeding from the same organism. So far as the organism was concerned in either stage, it went to the cave only to die, and, from the cave, in some mysterious fashion, its own kind came forth. Therefore, a taboo is built up on both sides of the threshold, a taboo of the most thoroughgoing and binding nature, the mere thought of whose violation results in psychosis. The taboo, of course, has held their development in check for centuries. Interesting?"

"Yeah!"

"The clue was what was important, Jake. Once I had it, I could relate their life-cycle to the *Goma* of Venus, the *Lepidoptera* of Earth, the *Sistinsinsi* of Altair VI. And the clincher was that one of the winged forms hatched out of a cocoon just after I'd finished explaining what was up to that moment only my hypothesis."

"How did they take it?"

"Startled at first. But it explained something they were very curious about and swept away an immense weight of ugly fear. Of course, they still die in the caves to all intents and purposes. But they can see their lives as a perfect reproductive circle with the caves as a locus. And what a reciprocity they can work out—they are working out!"

"Reciprocity?" Donelli had almost moved to a sitting position.

Helena wiped his face with a soft cloth. "Don't you see? The burrowers were injuring the avian gardens by nibbling at the roots. They will now use only the roots of old, strong plants which the surface creatures

will designate and set aside for them. They will also aid avian horticulture by making certain the roots have plenty of nourishing space in which to grow. In return, the avians will bring them surface plants which are not available to tunnel creatures, while the burrowers provide the surface with the products of their mines and labors underground. To say nothing of the intelligent rearing they can now give their young, though at a distance. And when the fluorescent light system that Dr. Ibn Yussuf worked out for them becomes universal, the avians may travel freely in the tunnels and guide the burrowers on the surface. The instinctual and haphazard may shortly be supplanted by a rich science."

"No wonder they broke their backs getting Q. And after working that out for them, all you did was repair the ship, fix me up, take off and set a course for the nearest traffic lane?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Dr. Blaine helped quite a bit with the take-off. This time he remembered the buttons! By the way, as far as the record is concerned, he and I maneuvered the ship off the ground under your direct supervision."

"Oh, so?"

"Just so. Right, Dr. Blaine?"

The archaeologist looked up impatiently. "Of course. Of course! There has not been one moment, since the disaster aboard the *Ionian Pinafore*, when I have not been under Mr. Donelli's orders."

There was a pause in which Dr. Blaine muttered to Dr. Yussuf over the ax-head.

"How old are you, Helena?" Donelli asked.

"Oh—old enough."

"But too clever, eh? Too educated for me?"

She cocked her head and smiled at him out of a secret corner of her face. "Maybe. We'll see what happens after we get back to the regular traffic lanes. After we're rescued. After you get your third mate's ticket. Here—what are you laughing at?"

He rumbled the amusement out of his throat. "Oh, I was just thinking how we earned our Q. By teaching a bunch of caterpillars that butterflies bring babies!"

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NEXT ISSUE

DATE LINE, a Surprising Story by Benj. Miller



The Rotohouse had begun to spin again

# THE ROTOHOUSE

*It's a mad whirl for Oona in a rotating domicile!*

**I**MAGINE," Abercrombie said impressively, "what being able to rotate your domicile at will can mean in terms of living zestfully! Imagine being able to enjoy a favorite vista from any window of your home at any time! Imagine waking in a bed-

room flooded with glorious sunlight and being able to luxuriate in that same sunlight in whatever room you choose! The Rotohouse, bids farewell to monotony, fixity, rigidity. The Rotohouse is history's first modern home."

**By MARGARET ST. CLAIR**

Oona nodded admiringly. Gee, he certainly could talk. And the house itself wasn't such a bad idea. "Have you sold it yet?" she asked.

Abercrombie turned faintly red. She seemed to have touched on a sore spot. "Well, no, not yet," he admitted, "Of course, the Rotohouse does cost a good deal to build. I put every cent I could spare into it. But the main trouble, I feel sure, is that people simply don't realize what 'modern' means. They come into my office talking about functionalism and wanting staircases without any railings! They're years behind the times. That's why I want you and Mr. Ritterbush to go and live in it. It would help me such a lot."

Across the table Oona looked at Jick. His expression showed the surprise she felt. No doubt Abercrombie thought he'd mentioned it to them before—he combined brilliance with a high degree of absent-mindedness.

"In—in the Rotohouse?" she asked.

"Yes. If people could see a young, modern couple like yourselves living in it, obviously relishing life to the full, they'd realize what a mobile domicile can mean. They'd stop those stupid jokes about carousels and amusement parks. They'd take the Rotohouse seriously."

"Um. I don't—"

"You're worrying about your own place, I suppose," Abercrombie said comprehendingly. "Don't. I'll have somebody from the office take care of things while you're gone. You can give yourselves up with a clear conscience to enjoying the Rotohouse."

"It's really something to enjoy. Besides being mobile, Mrs. Ritterbush, the house is modern in every way. There's a perfume shower and Swedish massage machine in the bath, the kitchen has all the standard stuff and a Vitamineer, and there's push-button cleaning in all the rooms and complete weather control. The house has everything. Even the mousetraps are electric. Why not come and take a look at it?"

Oona wavered. "Well—" she said.

**H**ALF an hour later her dubiety had been changed to wild enthusiasm. It wasn't so much that the Rotohouse rotated, though that was nice enough; there was a big central pylon, heavily padded and upholstered in luciloy with seats around it and drawers underneath for storage space, and the house did indubitably rotate around it when you pushed the proper switch. The

really wonderful thing about the Rotohouse was the way it was fixed up inside.

One whole wall of the living room (shaped like a piece of pie and decorated in shades of pistachio and epidote) was occupied by an enormous stereo. In the bath, besides the perfume shower (gee, she could hardly wait to try it) and Swedish massage machine Abercrombie had spoken of, there was a galooner and aridifier for the hair which ought to save her hours and hours at the beauty shop.

The kitchen had a comminuter for juices and an electric barbolizer as well as the Vitamineer, and there were viewing plates in both bedrooms which became transparent when you pressed a switch, so that you could lie in bed at night and watch the constellations wheeling over your head if you wanted to. Jick was crazy about the workshop in the hangarage—it was full of all kinds of machinery Oona didn't even know the names of.

All in all, it was the nicest house she had ever seen. When Abercrombie gave her the keys and made a little speech saying he knew he could rely on her and thanking her, it was all she could do to keep from hugging him.

After a month of living in the Rotohouse, Oona's enthusiasm was still at high pitch. Of course, she was always having to show people through it, and that meant things had to be kept picked up and clean. But Abercrombie was always sending her chocolates and bon-bons "half the time they were Venus imports, too) out of gratitude, and when you can produce immaculate, aseptic cleanliness by pushing one button and then, fifteen minutes later, pushing another one, housework doesn't amount to much. Oona took to spending most of her time in the kitchen, trying out dishes she'd never have dared to tackle ordinarily, and her hair-dos reached a new high in complexity.

"Everything going O. K., kid?" Jick asked one night as she poured théo in his cup. "Gosh, this torté's good. . . . No trouble with the house?"

"Un-unh. Oh, there was a sort of spitting noise when I turned the house around today. It didn't amount to much."

Jick looked grave. "I'll have a man come out tomorrow and fix it," he said. "I met Abercrombie today at lunch, and he told me a committee's coming out with him day after tomorrow to inspect the Rotohouse. He almost forgot to mention it—you know how absent-minded he is. But anyhow, Mosher,

the park commissioner, is on the committee, and there'll be a woman editor from *Homes*!, and a man named McPherson who's handling the financing for that new housing project. Abercrombie says McPherson is a tough baby, very conservative and hard to convince.

"I'll have the electrician come out tomorrow for sure. We can't afford to have anything go wrong. Why, Abercrombie's whole future depends on this."

Next morning after Jack had left, Oona stood under the perfume shower and reviewed her plans for the day. She'd straighten up the place and clean before the electrician came. After he'd gone (it oughtn't to take him long, because there really wasn't anything wrong with the house), she'd make some of those little gaufrettes au rhum Jack praised so much, and petits fours glacés would be nice, and maybe a bombe alsacienne. Some fancy refreshments ought to put the committee in a good mood.

After she got done with that, she'd go over to the Flower Mart and see if she could pick up some of those big purple Martian epiphytes to arrange in the ewers in the living room. Or would magenta ones be better? She'd have to think. She felt sort of nervous, and she wanted to have everything just so. It wouldn't do to slip up on anything while the committee was here.

She was just getting out of the massage machine when the electrician chimed. "In a minute!" Oona carolled into the speaking tube. She dashed into the bedroom, dragged an all-in-one from the closet, and zipped it up the front. When she had struggled into her slippers, she raced to the dressing table and picked up the atomizer with the cosmilac. She pulled the battery of mirrors around to face the light and looked into it. She froze.

Three people were standing by the front portal—a woman, the smartness of whose dress was visible even in the reflection, and two men. With a faint hope that the mirror was deceiving her, Oona tore over to the window and looked out. No, they were really there.

There was no possible doubt about who they were, either. Abercrombie's committee, minus Abercrombie, had arrived a day ahead of time. Abercrombie had been absent-minded again, and Oona was going to have to demonstrate the Rotohouse to the committee without the help of purple Martian epiphytes, gaufrettes au rhum, or even cosmilac.

And Abercrombie's whole future depended on it. Oona closed her eyes.

An instant later she had opened them again and was spreading up the bed with wild energy. She grabbed Jack's sleeping tunic and an assortment of underwear from the chaise, dashed into the living room and picked up three tabloids and a magazine, collected a double boiler crusted with oatmeal, and three-quarters of a lemon chiffon pie from the kitchen, and ran back with her burden into the living room.

What was she to do with the stuff? There simply wasn't time enough to put it away properly, and she couldn't just stick it in one of the closets; people always opened closets and looked inside. The doorbell chimed once more. Oona hesitated for an agonized second and then ran to the padded pylon at the end of the room. She tugged at the drawer under the padded seats, got it open, and stuffed in the junk she was carrying. It was the best she could do. And it was hardly likely they'd get down on their knees to look in those drawers. Then Oona ran to the door.

THE first part of the interview went well. Seen up close, Miss Holloway's chic (the editor from *Homes*!) was almost paralyzing, and Oona felt horribly conscious of her own deficiencies in grooming and cosmilac. Miss Holloway's headgear was two gazolba feathers held in place with a clasp of Aphroditon pearls, and her suit was an off-shade of Parmesan pink. But she introduced the two men to Oona as politely as could be, and she ohed and ahed over everything when Oona started showing them around. She said it was a most interesting house and she took several color pictures of the kitchen and the bath.

"This what makes it turn round?" McPherson asked suddenly when they had gone back to the living room. He was standing over by the pylon, looking at the panel the push buttons were set in.

"Yes, it is," Oona replied.

"Make it turn round, then," he demanded.

Rather nervously, Oona went to the switch and pushed. There was a faint spitting noise, but the Rotohouse rotated with its usual silent smoothness until she pressed the button again to make it stop.

"Well, well!" McPherson said. His usually sour face bore a faint smile. "What's this one for?"



"That's push button cleaning." Oona demonstrated.

"Well, I'll be darned. Never saw anything like it." McPherson was looking almost pleased; maybe Jack was wrong and he wasn't such a tough baby after all. Just because a man wore a shirt with a collar and a necktie, it didn't follow that he was conservative in everything.

"And this one?" McPherson asked, indicating the last button on the panel.

"That's the weather control—temperature, moisture, air circulation, and static electricity." Oona demonstrated again.

"I wonder what they'll think of next," McPherson said to no one in particular. "Say, what's that noise?"

Oona listened carefully. That staccato snapping . . . After a moment she identified it. "It's the mousetraps," she said with a touch of apology. "They're electric. They must be going off by themselves."

"Going off by themselves?" McPherson said. "Hum. . . I'm going to make it go round some more."

While Oona looked on apprehensively, he started the Rotohouse, stopped it, started it again. Every time he pressed the button the spitting sound was a little louder.

On the fifth push there was a startling *Spppp!* McPherson jumped back. The Rotohouse began to spin.

Picking herself up from the padding at the curved end of the living room, Oona reflected that it certainly was a good thing Abercrombie had had this wall of the living room upholstered in Springtex. Otherwise somebody might have been hurt. As it was, they were only a little bruised. She looked around herself.

Her first impression was that the Rotohouse was moving at a lively clip. The light flickered constantly as the living room swung from sunlight into shade and back again. Through the big pane of crystaplex nothing was visible but a moving blur. There was a constant barrage of snaps from the mousetraps which were going off and then resetting themselves.

Miss Holloway (one of the gazolba plumes was badly bent) was struggling into a sitting position on the Springtex, to Oona's right. She looked cross. On the other side of Miss Holloway, Commissioner Mosher was getting to his knees; and to Oona's left, Mr. McPherson slowly sat up. Hesitantly, Oona rose to her feet.

Ordinarily, the floor of the pie-shaped living room was the floor, and the curved wall (the rim of the pie) on which Oona was standing was just a wall. But now, probably because the Rotohouse was going too fast, the curved wall had become the floor and the pylon at the end of the room was the ceiling, six or eight meters above Oona's head.

"How do we stop this thing?" Commissioner Mosher said over the noise of the mousetraps. He was a little man with rather a pleasant voice.

"I don't know," Oona said after a moment. She was on the edge of tears. "I guess maybe we could climb up and—"

Abruptly, the Rotohouse stopped. Gravity reasserted its sway. Oona and the three committee members slid down from the padding and landed on the floor. Miss Holloway made a considerable thump. The clashing of the mousetraps stopped. There was an instant's pause.

"Let's get out of here," Miss Holloway said. She stood up and rubbed herself. "I don't like this place."

Abercrombie's whole future . . . "It's a lovely house," Oona said desperately. "Honestly, it's the most zestful place! If you'll only have a cup of theo, I'm sure . . ."

"I don't want any theo," Miss Holloway said ungraciously. She was bending the gazolba feather back into shape; Oona saw that one or two of her galoons were coming down. "None of us wants any theo. Do you, Mr. McPherson?"

"Well, if the young lady wants to make us some," Mr. McPherson said cautiously.

He liked her, Oona saw. Maybe it wasn't too late. Before Miss Holloway could say anything more, she raced for the cups and the samovar.

"Good theo," McPherson said a few minutes later. "Mrs. Ritterbush, could I have another cup?"

Hastily, Oona poured it out for him. She was beginning to feel better. She'd been silly to get so worked up just because the Rotohouse had gone around a little by itself. Things were going to be all right.

McPHERSON paused with the cup halfway to his lips. "Say, what's that noise?" he demanded. "Are those mousetraps beginning to go off again?"

A horrid apprehension gripped at Oona's heart. The mousetraps . . . did it mean. . . . Oh, heavens!

The samovar toppled. The cups slopped and spilled. Miss Holloway screamed. The Rotohouse had begun to rotate again.

Oona, picking herself up from the Springtex at the end of the room for the second time, felt a sort of frozen calm. After all, the worst had happened; there couldn't be anything more. She looked toward Miss Holloway. The *Homes* editor was picking a teacup out of her hair. Her expression was furious.

For a moment there was silence, broken only by the noise the mousetraps made. Commissioner Mosher cleared his throat. "I'm going to see if I can shut it off," he said. He began a cautious climb up the floor from one piece of furniture to another. Once he slipped and fell almost down to the Springtex, but he caught himself and started up again.

Oona watched him breathlessly. She didn't know what good it would do if he did get up to the pylon. Probably the Rotohouse wouldn't stop moving even if he did press the button. And Abercrombie's future was ruined irrevocably. But Mosher was a man and ought to understand machinery. It would be something if he could shut it off.

Mosher, teetering on the leg of a built-in Martini table, grabbed at the pylon frantically. Nothing happened. He grabbed again, lost his balance, and after a series of undignified contortions, landed on the padding with a solid thump.

No one really noticed his arrival. They had other things on their minds. Mosher's last grab at the panel had been effective, though in the wrong way. The push button cleaning had come on.

Ordinarily the cleansing agent (ozonated water) played gently over the surfaces in the room being cleaned and, its mission accomplished, disappeared quietly into a drain. But by now the Rotohouse was going around quite fast. Oona noticed that the light coming through the window no longer flickered but had changed into an even pale gray blur. It reminded her of a story she had read once about a time-traveling machine. The noise of the mousetraps was deafening.

The consequence of this rapid motion was that the water was hurled outward with considerable force toward the people lying on the padded wall. It hurt. It stung. And it was dreadfully cold.

"Can't you do something?" Miss Holloway asked pettishly. Oona, looking at her,

saw that her eye-do had run all over her face and that there was a broad streak of bright purple dye down one cheek from the metallic dust on her hair. The Parmesan pink of her suit, attacked by the ozone in the water, had turned in spots to a dirty white. "This is terrible. I'm sitting in water ten centimeters deep, and it's still coming down. After all, Mrs. Ritterbush, it's your house."

There was truth in the accusation, Oona felt. Of course, really it was Abercrombie's (poor Abercrombie, poor, poor Abercrombie) house, but there wasn't any point in reminding Miss Holloway of that. Oona swallowed. She kicked off her slippers (they were the xyloplastic sabots *Milady* had said were so good this year).

"I'll try," she said.

CLIMBING up the floor hadn't looked easy when Mosher tried it, and Oona found almost at once that it was even harder than it looked. Centrifugal force pulled and tugged and worried at her in a way gravity never had. She kept slipping back.

At last she was balanced on the Martini table just as Mosher had been. Like him, she grabbed at the pylon. Like him, she seemed to miss. Like him, she came tumbling down again.

The ozonated water was still pelting down. Panting, Oona leaned on one elbow and got back her breath. She'd have to try it again; Jick wouldn't be home for hours. Next time she'd go up sort of zig-zag. The straight route was shorter, but it meant too far between steps. If—

Mr. McPherson coughed portentously and cleared his throat. "Seems to me it's getting awfully cold in here," he said.

Struck by a sudden wild surmise, Oona turned her gaze ceilingward. Did it—had she punched the weather—was it— Yes.

It had begun to snow. . . .

"Don't take it so hard, baby child," Jick begged. She was sitting on his lap, her cheek pressed against his head, on the pneumoport in their own non-mobile domicile. "You poor little thing, it wasn't your fault." He tightened his grip around her waist.

Oona sighed. "Um," she said.

"You haven't a thing to feel bad about. It not only wasn't your fault at all, but you were the one, Oona, who made the thing stop. If it hadn't been for your thinking to wedge your sabots in between the main pivot and the rest of the house, honey, you'd still

be going around in that thing. Why, you really saved the day."

**O**ONA sighed once more.

"Of course, Abercrombie was a little sore about it at first," Jick went on. "It made him sore when Commissioner Mosher came into his office and told him that you'd suggested he order a Rotohouse for a main feature in the new amusement park. He felt it hurt his dignity.

"But Abercrombie's over it. I saw him today, and he said Mosher's ordered five of them, with all the fixings, for the Glee Grotto. His commission as architect will be over 20,000 I.U.s. What's dignity compared with dough like that?"

Jick patted Oona's shoulder. "So you haven't anything to worry about. Abercrombie's paid the bill Miss Holloway sent him for her headgear and her suit, and he's not mad at you any more. In fact, he said to be sure to send you his best regards. He said he'd like to do something to show his appreciation of your sending Commissioner Mosher to him. He'd like to design you a house."

Oona sighed for the third time. She closed her eyes. How could she tell Jick? But there had been a half hour in there, between the time it had begun to snow and the time she'd wedged her xyloplastic sabots in and

made the Rotohouse stop, that she could hardly bear to think about.

The drawers in the pylon had been close to the center of rotation, that must be why they hadn't come open earlier. The Rotohouse had had to be rotating at a really dizzy rate of speed for them to come whizzing out. But when they had—Oona gave her biggest sigh thus far.

The double boiler with the dried-up oatmeal in it had hit Miss Holloway in the chest. Oatmeal had spattered all over her. She'd screeched like a nervous weetaete. Jick's sleeping tunic and the assortment of underwear had draped themselves over Commissioner Mosher's frame with loving solicitude. Oona's new petiskirt, the one she'd hesitated so long about buying because it was so sort of . . . well, you know . . . had been wrapped about his head. And the lemon chiffon pie—

The lemon chiffon pie had hit the conservative Mr. McPherson in the face. There'd been lemon chiffon pie in his eyebrows and his ears, under his necktie, behind his pince-nez.

They'd had to scrape lemon chiffon pie off him with a fork.

And now Abercrombie wanted to design her a house. No doubt it was kind of him, but—

"I'd just as soon he didn't," Oona said.

## THE READER SPEAKS

(Continued from page 7)

And, much more recently, Havelock Ellis and Bertrand Russell, among other great figures, suffered persecution for advancing theories about true human impulses and behavior that have, inevitably, been borne out, at least in part, by the Kinsey Report. Man finds it very difficult to live with himself and his beliefs at one and the same time.

What then, has faith to do with science fiction? To us, it seems to have a very great deal. For in the near future Man is going to achieve his ago-old dream and visit other planets—there to face conditions and, perhaps, life forms which will test the flexibility and adaptability of his faith to the utmost if he is not to repeat the tragic and needless massacres of the Conquistadores.

He has got to believe—but believe in roots both less material and more finite than any he has hitherto embraced. He has got to believe that his mere organic existence, the

existence of differences in matter between himself and, say, the fabric which clothes him, the presence of the Solar System itself, is sufficient proof of some governing entity which makes the Universe possible.

Essentially he must believe in his own humility while seeking ever to expand the limited horizons of his senses and muscles—which is the root of all religion as well as faith. If he does not his contact with alien worlds and life forms must destroy him as surely as, in far lesser degree, it destroyed the proud Spaniards who captured a hemisphere only to lose their souls.

## OUR NEXT ISSUE

**O**CTOBER promises to be a notable month for TWS—not only because of the appearance of a brilliant author new to

these pages but because of the reappearance, after too long an absence, of one of the ablest of all practitioners of the high art and science of stf . . . to wit, Miss Leigh Brackett.

Miss Brackett, who has been busy for too long writing motion pictures (**THE BIG SLEEP**) and detective novels and stories, last appeared in TWS in the Spring, 1944, issue with a memorable novelet, **THE VEIL OF ASTELLAR**. Her last appearance in our companion magazine, **STARTLING STORIES**, came in the Fall issue of the same year with the even better-known and liked **SHADOW OVER MARS**.

Now she returns to science fiction and **THRILLING WONDER STORIES** with the lead novelet for our next issue, **THE MOON THAT VANISHED**. It is a fine example of the Brackett genius for creating moods of exotic mystery and magic, presented with a forthright realism that drags the reader inexorably into the story she creates.

Its locale is Venus, its time the distant future, its hero David Heath, a derelict from Earth who has delved too deeply into the strange lore of the cloud-shrouded neighbor planet, its heroine Alor, in love with an adventurer who seeks the secrets contained in the vast crater where once a moon has fallen.

The story is a tale of quest and of pursuit—by implacable ministers of a god whose resting place they are bound to preserve undefiled. Over oceans and through swamps to the island of the crater go pursued and pursuer—each group containing elements of revolt within itself.

And the ultimate fulfillment of the quest is one which, for high excitement and peril and revelation of what lies within Terran and Venusian alike, is on a par with and perhaps a bit beyond the most magnificent of Miss Brackett's past writings. **THE MOON THAT VANISHED** is a fitting feature novelet for a big issue.

The spanning of time through hereditary memory is the theme of Arthur J. Burks' unusual novelet, **YESTERDAY'S DOORS**. In this magnificently imaginative tale of past and present intermixed, a man who knows not his name emerges from a coma to discover himself supplied with an alien identity and due to suffer for the slaying of a girl who remains an utter unknown to him unless he agrees to let himself be the subject of some highly unorthodox experiments.

He submits—what choice has he?—and soon finds himself put under a scientific spell which results in his facing an immense building whose facade is his own face. The building has many doors and he must pass through them one at a time to learn the secrets of what his forefathers knew in the past.

What he discovers—and how he gradually unravels the blank page of his own past life—make **YESTERDAY'S DOORS** the finest achievement to come off Mr. Burks' type-writer in the science fiction field.

Third in next issue's novelet parade for TWS is **MIRACLE TOWN** by William F. Temple, an extremely gifted young author whose work is just beginning to make itself felt in professional magazine circles.

**MIRACLE TOWN** tells of a small Mid-western community which is suffering from erosion of the soul as well as of the soil, to the despair of Editor Seth Barnard of the *Peterville Press*, who, on page one, has adjourned to the outskirts of town to drain a can of beer and meditate upon the unhappiness of his lot.

He sees nothing remarkable in being accosted by a stranger named Hezekiah ("Not my fault.") until the latter picks up an empty beer can and proceeds to get more than his money's worth of beer out of it.

From then on things happen. Hezekiah, it develops—slowly to the incredulous Seth Barnard—is an emissary come on the heels of a strange electronic invasion which enables Seth to turn the community upside down as his every thought becomes reality.

What happens to Peterville shouldn't happen to the worst-conducted kennel in the world—but what happens is screamingly funny as well as social satire with a razor-edge tip. This story in itself is sufficient affirmative to the question of the desirability of humor in stf and we venture to prophesy that while it is the first story of Mr. Temple's to appear in TWS, it will definitely not be the last.

The next issue, thanks to our increased size, offers another newcomer, Benj. Miller (don't ask us about that Benj. but that's the way Mr. Miller likes it), who comes in with the first of what promises to be a gorgeous series, **DATE LINE**.

The idea behind **DATE LINE** is uproarious—being merely an extension of the on-the-spot historical broadcasts of a major radio network to include time travel and the actual appearance of the broadcasters on the scene

to say nothing of vice versa. You'll feel sympathy for the endless headaches of Stieve Andro, who has the timecaster's job, and delight in the promotional antics of Orig Prem, his robot advance man.

The short stories, as has been invariably the case of recent issues, will be selected from a truly distinguished list that includes Ray Bradbury, the two Longs, Wesley and Frank Belknap, William Fitzgerald, John Macdonald and Margaret St. Clair among others. Ye Ed. will be very much present with THE READER SPEAKS and the SCIENCE FICTION BOOK REVIEW and there is a definite probability of other fact features of interest to sf fans. We like October's looks ourselves.

## LETTERS FROM READERS

**W**ELL, we suppose it had to happen. One, W. B. Kennedy, of McCool, Mississippi, has sent us a postcard addressed to "Scientifiction," 10 East 40th Street, New York, 16, N. Y. in which, after stating that he learned of us through a well-known writer's magazine, he requests us to forward him a specimen copy of "Scientifiction." We find ourselves at a loss.

With which we shall put the letter column on a more usual and therefore irrational basis. Since plenty of decayed fruit is headed our way later on, we'll open with a mild puff.

## HUMOUR IS HUMOR

by D. R. Smith

Dear Editor: Never have I agreed with anyone in the science-fiction world as much as I agree with you when you urge the need for more humour in science fiction magazines. It is a doctrine which has had my ardent support for most of the interminable period during which I have been the reader—too often the suffering, the disgusted reader—of these magazines, but one which has never had much general support.

Of course, some appalling crimes against the literary art were committed in the early days under the pretence of writing funny stories, but the bad effect of these can hardly persist today. In any case what I want, and what I believe you to be arguing for, is the use of a lighter touch and a more humorous approach to the telling of "straight" stories, rather than simple comedy—though a little of this would be most welcome.

I differ from you on some details, inevitably, such as the definition of a sense of tragedy. I think I might follow your argument better here if I'd read the article which you mention. I certainly don't think that—in England at least—it is easier to make an audience weep than laugh. Quite the contrary. Theatre audiences here seem ashamed to feel saddened and moved by tragedy on the stage.

I have been grossly annoyed by inane laughter as a magnificent King Lear staggered on the stage lamenting over the corpse of his murdered daughter in his dying arms. For that matter I've been surprised into laughter myself by Macbeth, hunted to the death by the implacable Macduff, bobbing up out of a trapdoor as his enemy charged off the stage. Comedians have

made me furious at times by incompetence—especially when trying to be solemnly soulful—but never sad. 13 Church Road, Harthill, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, England.

All of which hits our nail right on the head. As for Lear—well, to us it is not a good tragedy for the very reason you mention. It is too prone to a slapstick interpretation by the audience—something which has never to our knowledge happened to Hamlet except when wretchedly performed.

Perhaps we can make our idea of tragedy a bit more lucid. A story or play or poem can be savage and bitter and unhappy without achieving it—for tragedy, to be effective, must contain a grace which can only come from acceptance of the inevitable—of which savagery and bitterness are the exact opposite.

Man railing against fate is irretrievably comic, no matter how impersonal his motives. He only achieves greatness when conquering his lot or when bowing to it. Certainly Shakespeare understood this—as did Cervantes.

## AVE, OLIVER

by Chad Oliver

Dear Editor: Well, pard, it's been many a barren month since we last crossed verbal lances on the battle-scarred fields of *The Reader Speaks*. Shall we plunge with renewed vigor into the fray? Heigh-ho and twiddle-dum!

The new, greater, enlarged, magnificent TWS, at a mere nickel more every other month, is a cause for fan-atic ecstasy. Alas, however, and alack, the story standard fell off woefully in this April edition. I'm sincerely sorry to see it, because the stories of late have been at a remarkably high level. I'm confident that this is but a momentary lapse into former times, which are gone but not, sadly, forgotten.

Best yarn this trip was Long's *The World of Wulkins*, which amazes me no end. Frank Belknap Long—my old nemesis! I can only say that it was splendid, far and away the best story by this author that I have encountered to date. It smacks of Bradbury somewhat and strikes me as being a really first-rate example of what a new treatment, coupled with effective writing, can do to a tired theme. One salute to Mr. Long.

*Pile of Trouble*, by Genius Kuttner, was a lot funnier than the first Hogben tale and *myu bueno*. Kuttner is like Midas—whatever he touches turns to gold. Just think of what Midas could have done with a dozen assorted pen-names.

Burks was interesting, Jacobi and Lee acceptable—the latter had a nice idea. George O. Smith was better than usual—I read it through. Problems are nice but I like people in my stories.

Our lamented novel, Zagat's *The Faceless Men*, had just about every thing—technically. A little science, a little action, a little sex. But it was very, very dull. I'm tempted to remark that Putnam's Dad was aptly named but let it go. It just didn't go off . . .

I am pleased to see that Dr. Amadeus Rafferty has joined your staff. I am sure that his thoughtful, studious article will prove an inspiration to us all. Really, Ed., it was terrific—the funniest thing in yars and yars. And the pix are priceless.

On yawn for the cover—a tired old friend. On the interiors, both Finlay and Stevens are commendable although neither are doing the work of which they are capable. Virgil Finlay, in my opinion, should be an artist instead of an illustrator. He can do beautiful work.



I am dead set against the sexy pic on the lead novels in both TWS and STARTLING. Shame on you, you cad. Verily, the mags tread devious pathways on the road to maturity. I think that the caption on Page 31 of the current STARTLING is a masterpiece of something. The pic shows our dainty heroine, shyly garbed in her Luxables, gazing at a goggle-eyed male in the door. There was Ed Bromson—whom she believed she had sent to Earth Two! You should make SURE of those things, my good woman.

The Book Review is a nice department, well-handled. The Reader Speaks is always entertaining—funny to note the many references to jazz by various fans. Just for the record, this correspondent is a devotee of everything from Dixieland through the less insane forms of re-bop. Maybe we should elect Goodman's *Beyond the Moon* as a TWS theme song, no?

A final bravo for Ray Bradbury in general and *The Shape of Things* in particular. Bradbury is IT.

My apologies for the length of this manuscript, but the university seems determined to keep my letter-writing at a minimum, and I must make the most of what chances I have. Who said thank Ghu for the university? Was it you, editor? And after all we've been to each other, too.—2410 Wichita, Austin, Texas.

No, we never said that one, Chad, though Ghu're welcome. Since we have begun that way, we'll take your missive in reverse order. On Bradbury (or should we say re Bradbury? No?), complete concurrence.

As for Benny Ghudman, okay, but why *Beyond the Moon*? After looking at any of the contents pages of recent issues of SS and TWS (April TWS excepted, perhaps), we're all for *String of Pearls*. We always liked Lou McGarrity's trombone chorus.

As for the next paragraph in reverse, go wash your own Luxables. The pathway to maturity may be devious but this particular turning is—ummmmm. How about writing us another letter some year?

## SHE'S KIDDING

by Gay Morrow, M.D.

Dear Editor: I have long been an stf fan but only recently have been in a position to collect back numbers. In one of the latter (?) TWSes, XVI (April, 1940), I noticed an advertisement for *Between Worlds* by Garret Smith, of which you had a few copies left. If you have one still remaining will you drop me a card immediately, stating its present cost?

Item No. 2—and just as important. When is your companion magazine, CAPTAIN FUTURE, to come back? That was one of the better-written series in stf. The author even made dimensional and time shifts seem like science fiction instead of fantasy.

May I suggest that Arkham House, Hadley Publishing Company, Prime Press or Fantasy Press publish all the Captain Future stories in book form? I would certainly buy a copy of each, autographed or not.—Wilmington General Hospital, Wilmington 14, Delaware.

Phew—quite a lot of questions, Dr. Morrow. Well, unfortunately no copies of *Between Worlds* have been available for some time—though perhaps, on reading this, some dealer or collector may get in touch with you. I hope so. As for Captain Future—he is indefinitely suspended from the publication schedule. He had quite a long life at that. Thanks for the kind words about him.

## DAFFY PULL

by R. R. F. Bailey

Dear Editor. After seven years of import bans I have finally managed to break through the iron curtain with a subscription to TWS. So far I have received four issues—October, December, February and April—and I am completely sold on the contents. I especially like the large readers' department but I have one grievance, which I am setting down in a

### DAFFY DITTY

Warps in space  
Ships of time  
Flaming jets  
Future crime

I enjoy

Galactic pirates  
Atomic life  
Super nova  
Mutant wife

Do not annoy

But that which makes me see red is  
Cover with near-nekked leddies.

From the trend of most letters it appears that my views on this point are shared by many readers. How about a poll to test the opinion of readers in general?

I won't attempt to put the contents of the April issue in an order of preference. They are all tops. I especially enjoyed FILE OF TROUBLE and, of course, Smith is always way ahead.

The one story that didn't hold water was A PROBLEM IN ASTROGATION. It seems to me that at several times the speed of light (providing the theory of infinite mass and all length in the direction of travel didn't hold good) the traveller would go forward in time if anything. Also, how can anyone check his position visually at supra-light speeds? Since he is catching up with light from bodies behind him all stars in the universe would appear to be in front of the ship and anyway the Doppler effect would be something fierce if he tried spectroscopic identification. Still, I'm only an ignorant layman.—14 Market Place, Melton Mowbray, Leic, England.

Well, Frere Bailey, you seem to have us coming—and going. About all we can do is reply in kind (or unkind) with a Daffy Ditty of our own, to wit—

Re the covers  
Dressing, Hades!  
Who wants lettuce  
On his ladies?

Not a one

Though some others  
Like them draped  
We prefer them  
Boldly shaped

All in fun

And we'll leave to you the topic  
Of that Doppler spectroscopic

I-den-ti-fi-cay-she-un  
While we run.

Which should take care of that for awhile.

## HE JUST DON'T CARE

by Franklin M. Dietz, Jr.

Dear Sir: Just a letter to give you my opinions on the April issue of TWS. As a whole it was very good. The lead story, **THE FACELESS MEN**, by Arthur Leo Zagat was very well written and quite interesting, although when I began it I had the impression of reading another of those one-man-to-save-the-world stories which seem to be recurring so often of late. And, having such an impression, the story didn't seem as good as it would have been without it.

**THIEVES OF TIME** by Arthur J. Burks was a passable story but it seems to me it would have been very much better if the setting had been in a large city rather than in Brazil. The rest of the stories were good but merit no special comment.

**THE READERS SCREECH** was very good as usual. It is good to see such an increase in the number of pages devoted to your letters from readers. As this is my first letter to TWS I do not expect or especially care to see it published—but if you desire to do so I would appreciate your mentioning that I am interested in corresponding with other fans if anyone cares to write.—Boz #A, Kings Park, Long Island, New York.

About the only reassurance we can give you, Franklin, is that we have for some time been putting down the old editorial foot hard on those one-man-to-save-the-world stories that give you critical gooseflesh. Sooner or later there will be a lot fewer of them appearing in these pages and those o' SS.

## STEAM VENT

by Mrs. Helen Hough

Dear Editor: May I waste a few minutes of your time, even though I know you don't print hand-written letters? (We do so—when they rate it—Ed.) I just want to let off some steam, and tell you how much I enjoy your magazines. (We should let one like this get away!—Ed.)

The readers' section is what I always turn to first. Some of your correspondents are terrific. Sneaky is a treasure, so treat him nicely. Maybe there aren't many active femme fans—I don't know anything about "fandom" myself—and I don't know the average age of your lady readers—but I do know that when a gal has a husband and a couple of kids she doesn't have time to gallivant around to conventions and such. Also, any magazine more likely to appeal to men seems to give the males a feeling that women should keep out.

Anyhow, the magazine is swell, the stories grand, the readers all wonderful and someday I'll type you a letter and maybe you'll print it. Would you be so kind to an old married woman?—Pera, Indiana.

Answer—No! As proved by the above.

## SPACE WEAPONS (Continued)

by J. P. Conlon

Dear Sir: I note a couple of comments on my letter about space weapons (TWS, December, 1947) both of which seem thoughtfully written. One gentleman speaks of deceiving radio-controlled bombs. I don't know if Jerry used radio bombs against England but he used some of the "Fritz" type in the Mediterranean. No radio jammers were used on them. Shooting the mother ship down sent them out of control.

Use of radio to counteract radar and the "Window" and "Rope" tricks could be adapted to foul up radio-controlled robots. But there still remain heat, light, magnetic and radiation-seekers. I think these too can be fooled. Who's got an idea?

Mr. Pace's thoughts on fire control are nice. We can use present systems on spaceships, I'll bet, but it

would be a rugged job adapting them to such speeds. The B-29 had one radar-sighted gun position in the extreme tail. Maybe a futuristic version of this would turn the trick. They'd have to be able to lead a target at fantastic distances however.

As for "rays", maybe someone can find what the "Sword of Light" was in the ancient Irish fairy tales and use it. It "flashed around the world seven times every time it was drawn." Gaudy, no? But perhaps it was merely legend like Medusa's head. Still, how would anyone have thought of such a thing unless there was a basis? Many bits of folklore are grounded in fact, an unusual distance back in some cases.

I observe that I was rated a windbag by Michael Wigodsky or whatever he calls himself. No doubt he will be a reception center Pfc when he grows up. He might even develop into an omadhaun (What's that?—Ed.) But then, your average 12-year-old is always reading those horse operas. Mike is a bit advanced, now. And on what grounds am I a windbag? I never went to OCS.—Newark, Ohio.

Nice letter, Mr. Conlon. As for your "Sword of Light"—could it not have had its origin in lightning? Of course, anything could have happened and probably has.

## PILE OF GRIEF

by Wray Ballard

Dear Editor: After approximately a dozen years of reading science fiction I finally mustered enough ambition to add my applause and criticism. However, I almost wish I hadn't decided to start now, for I consider your April issue the poorest in some time.

Usually, in my humble opinion, your novels rank highest, but not this time. **PILE OF TROUBLE** was my first choice—why I like this series and don't like Bud Gregory is a mystery.

Second choice is **A DOG'S LIFE** and the other two shorts for the month. **DUD** struggled in someplace and **THE WORLD OF WULKINS** gets its head in the door. The other two didn't rate.

Your departments would be hard to improve upon, especially the Book Review, which I consider the best put out by any sf mag. They agree with my opinions on the books I have read, which is probably why I like 'em.

My favorite novel writer is Murray Leinster. Kuttner is good though hardly another Merritt, though he seems to try hard. Bradbury I have followed since he used to write fan letters. What was his first story published in a pro mag and what mag and what issue? Heinlein too I like. In fact, after I learned some of his pen names, I found he was several of my pet writers. Congratulations on your new size.—Blanchard, North Dakota.

We refer your query re Bradbury's (made that pun again!) professional debut to some of the better informed fans herewith, since we know from nothing except that we like his work too and purchase same whenever possible.

Otherwise, Wray (is that male or female) you have us flabbergasted.

## YIPE!

by Linda Bowles

Dear Editor:

Another cover by Bergey I see, And holding my head, I groaned, "Oh, me!" So I knew right then why it was no good When the trio appeared as I feared they would.

You know the three I'm talking about—the BEM's that Bergey loves beyond doubt, Who leer at the fair maid and the man Upon the cover of this mag we pan.

Despite the cover, this ish was swell,  
And to prove it, here's a lusty yell  
In thanks for the bigger mag this time,  
So keep it up—it's not a crime!

The stories were swell—especially DUD  
Then come the Hogbens—and, oh, bud!  
THE FACELESS MEN was really good  
And Finlay's pics appeared as they should.

The rest of the tales were all well done  
That is—well, all—except for one.  
Which? George Smith's Beyond a Doubt  
And, Ed., it's nothing to shout about!

MAN'S JOURNEY TO THE STARS was downright

silly,  
But nevertheless it was a dilly.  
I sat for a long, long time to ponder  
If any of those contraptions will fly up yonder (HA!).

THE READER SPEAKS winds up this poem,  
As usual, it was good, now I'll go home.  
But more corn will pour from out this dish  
After you've put out the next swell ish.

Put down your ray-gun, Ed. I'll go!  
But more corn and dribble next ish—see ya, Moe.  
—931 North Jackson, Topeka, Kansas.

Well, there's only one way to handle this  
one. So let's be at it—

Thanks for a last year's Hit Parade song  
We've sought the arms of Morpheus wrong  
We gave up counting curly sheep  
When e'er we found it hard to sleep  
Instead of sheep we used to tally  
The charms of Linda. Now, by golly  
Since we have not lost all our buttons  
We're going back to counting muttuns.  
Now let's get on with the department.

## BOUQUET OF STINKWEEDS

by Andrew Gregg

Dear Editor: I'm a little late getting started with this letter, but I can still melt the keys with what I write! A bouquet of stinkweeds to Kenneth Putnam for "Dud". In this screwball mess of monsters and fantastic machines a guy that tries to keep straight on who's fooling and chasing who is all mixed up unless he's got four eyes. It's not that the story is terrible. I've read worse, usually in TWS, but it was just the poorest in the book.

I'd place "File of Trouble" first, but only because it's funny. If anybody who smiled at "The Irritated People" didn't die laughing at this, he ought to be in a nut house.

"Thieves of Time" was something like "Dud", only more so. I went around in circles to find out where everybody was, if I was interested enough. Mostly I didn't bother to think it out, but just took the author's word for it.

"The Faceless Men" was pretty good. I'll say something interesting about the illustrations later. It had some nice inventions in it that might remotely be possible, very unusual for TWS.

"The World of Wulkins" is very good, much as I hate to admit it.

"Gentlemen, the Scavengers" was pretty good. It's good as an adventure, but that's all.

"A Problem in Astrogation" was, I see, just as short as possible. It's not too bad, though.

"A Dog's Life" side-stepped the idea of invention circles, you might say, very well. Perhaps too well, but it was a new idea for time travel, which is a little in its favor.

"Man's Journey to the Stars" is wonderful! It's something that's been needed for a long time. As satire it's average, but it's so new that it's wonderful!

A little more is needed, if you have the courage to print it. I've often thought of writing a satire of sci stories myself.

The cover was all right. It's about time that it illustrated one of the stories. When I looked at the picture on page 13 I almost forgot about reading the story. But the picture on page 19 is something else!

I think it would be better if you would print the number of words, at the closest five hundred, after the name of the story on the table of contents. Personally, I like to read the shortest stories first, and the longest one last, and some read just the other way around.

Wigodski is a quaint character. Some day someone is going to send him an envelope full of radioactive dust or, in the language of TWS, someone will witz-agog his cranium with a ray gun, using sliffulof as a propellent power.—221 Stanley Street, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin.

Why don't you just sliffulof off, Andrew. So you want us to print a word-count on each story? Why not just see the number of pages allotted to it in the contents page? That should give you some faint idea of its length if you can add—or does the wearing of shoes make this impossible?

Thanks for your kindness to Dr. Rafferty anent his journey to the stars. He writes to say he is well and hopes you are the same. Kenneth Putnam's regards run just a bit deeper.

## A NOTE OF LEVITY

by Don Cox

Dear Editor: Always! Always! on the cover. A girl in one place and her dress in another. It's horrible! It's shameful! She's good looking too. (Isn't she?) Bergey, when he wants to, and he usually does, can give out with a good-looking female woman on an equally good-looking cover. (Go ahead and laugh, giggle and cackle. Have you ever seen a male woman!) Now that I'm through raving, I'll settle down and comment (?) on the stories.

"The Faceless Men." This was not what I expected, yet was better than I thought.

"File of Trouble." This story, and its type usually is, was sort of whacky but very interesting in spite of it all. (No offense, plize, Meester Kutner. You are one of my favorite authors, many as there are.)

"Thieves of Time." Ah! Another story on time, without which no magazine would be complete. This had sort of a new twist to it, which was unusual. They are usually the same old thing, over and over.

"Gentlemen, the Scavengers!" Goody, goody. Lotsa people liked it. This was okie, a good an' guts, in large quantities, strewed all over the place.

"Dud." Though some may think so, I don't think this story aptly named. It was not a dud, it was a darned good story and I liked it. Ken Putnam? I've seen this name before but my memory's rotten. Oh, well, onto the next.

"A Problem in Astrogation." Was this short! Though short this was well done, Matt. No one should kick.

"The World of Wulkins." Kind of fantastic but what should a person expect? Frank did this in fine style.

"A Dog's Life." This rates one bark. (Which is low.) I certainly expected something better than this from George O. Smith. I was disappointed.

This issue's illustrations were on the whole O.K. The illustrations for THE FACELESS MEN were average.

The girl on page 19 has obtained a necktie since I last saw her (which was on the cover). PILE OF TROUBLE: page 51—???????? THIEVES OF TIME:

page 60 and 61—something is wrong with somebody's eyesight. Was Finlay having an optical illusion when he drew this picture? Page 81—Well done. Who's the new artist who has brains dripping out of a dead guy's

head? Pages 88 and 89—the fellow on page 88 looks as though he was trying to escape from the mother-ship.

Page 99—hhmmmmmm? Pages 102-3—boy was that guy tough! (the robot I mean). Page 118—boy, that guy

was really affected! Arf! arf! arroooooooow!

"The Reader Speaks" (Thass me, I hope.) As always, this column passed with high honors.

All in all, April THRILLING WONDER STORIES met with my approval.—4 Spring Street, Lubec, Maine.

Well, Donald, you seem to do most of your own commenting, complete with bird calls. The artist on page 81 was a chap named Braun. Next, please . . .

## EAGER DE BEAVE

by Jeannette Marie Thomas

Dear Editor: I am sincerely interested in science fiction. I belong to the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society and subscribe to its fanzine, the VARIANT. I read all prozines I can buy, beg or borrow for love or money.

From what I've seen of the club I belong to and of the other fanzine present at the Philcon, it appears that there are all too few teen-age members of fandom. There are all types of stf clubs, ranging from those devoted to pure fantasy to those devoted to pure science—but, as far as I know, there is as yet none for teen-age stf fan.

I would like to organize such a club. It may be either a club that holds actual meetings, a correspondence club or both. The age limit would be twenty, at which time other clubs seem to take over. The purpose would be to stimulate, develop and further the interest and conception of stf among teen-agers.

The dues would be five cents monthly and, as soon as I get about five members who will contribute some material, I will try to get out some sort of a club fanzine if I have to type it myself. The zine would be monthly at five cents an issue.

I promise faithfully to answer any and all letters I receive. I will be grateful for any information or ideas which any of the older fan would be good enough to give me.—2844 North Franklin Street, Philadelphia 33, Pennsylvania.

We wish you luck, Jeannette, and would like to hear from time to time how your plans are developing. We hope the printing of your letter in this column gives you a bit of a jet propelled take-off.

## SOMETHING HAYWIRE HERE

by Chris M. Keller

Dear Editor: This is my letter of introduction to TWS, or 'twas. My first missive of recommendation and condemnation to the merry and witty sanctimonious column of THE READER SPEAKS.

As a novice, and an acolyte, I do but hope my apprenticeship and feeble effort and attempt (such as my handiwork herewith is!) will meet with your approval and sanction; that my just and feeble efforts will not go unrequited and unrewarded in other quarters. I refer to the merrie and wittie tribe who infest and pester both THE READER SPEAKS and Ye Editor to death. They do but remind me of Shakespeare's pirate, the "sanctimonious pirate who went to sea with every commandment broken but one." Now, anon, I will to mine task of rudest labor. Which thesis of mine hath much ado about y'e April ish.

The Faceless Men had a good plot and incidents, but the story as a whole was marred by Zagat's handling of it: his quasi-amateurish style of writing and flimsy dialogue. The best thing in it was Finlay's artistic hand and pen.

Pile Of Trouble, as usual, was the unusually rib-provoking merry antics of Knott's Hoppers. Everything, silly as it is, Hank makes his Hoppers do it funny as all-get-out! Those frantic and impractical

hill-billies leave me with a chuckle and laugh all the time. Pure fun no end!

Thieves Of Time was a swell story and well written. I enjoyed it from start to finish.

Jacob's yarn, "Gentlemen, the Scavengers!", was so-and-so. And likewise so-and-so was A Problem In Astrology.

Dud was EXACTLY what its name implies. Somehow, Wisniewski in the dud reminded me so much of that characterist Wilt and Wag Wigodsky. Someone should have mis-named this particular sharpie, WIT-godsky.

The World of Wulkins was a really good yarn. It had humor as well as suspense and interest throughout.

As for A Dog's Life: Amateur Smith's yapping trifles was the dog all right! "Arf! Arf! Aowuuuuuuuu!" is my yapping reply to my dislike of that doggish thing. For my part (speaking privately), I could not for the like of me UNDERSTAND "the scientific reason for the writing of such an insipid and stupid thing!" After I had finished gorging it (with quite an effort to) I couldn't "remember a thing" of that dog-like thing.

By the way, let's have more of those short articles. I enjoy reading them. They were even better than "a dog's life."

And now to the sanctimonious and unholy portals of THE READER SPEAKS. I'd like to try (as must we quacky readers all perforce) my apprentice hand and mix and concoct a 'gin-rummy mickey-fin', a flimsy bon-mot of a thing in a quibbling-quabbling-quackly-gabbling bit of verse; which can't (I'm very sure) be any worse than the rot the other wits, wags, harpies, hags and sharpies dun in, irregardless of rhyme, metre, reason or plain sense. Here—to wit—is my WORST endeavor: my examination paper; which I doth herewith offer up to mine Master in an feeble and unworthy attempt to pass the grade of the TWS college of impolite publik knowledge:

"Say vellers, have you heard the latest news and whackiest things the stf gal fans are doing down there at Vassar college? I just received an Ethergram, from a frall named Diaphram, with all the newest dope about their latest scientific experiments and research work. I pass it on to you, dear waggish vellers, for what it's worth:

### VASSAR SPACE ETHERGRAM\*

They expect to send a Rocket Ship to the Moon.

To the Moon.

And they hope some day to fly there very soon.

Very soon.

And this silly flirly bunch of scientific mods.

Scientific snods.

Have perfected (so they say) a purple-feathered

Perfumed sod;

And they have the rudest notion that there's such a thing as perpetual motion

And expect to find the cause of it if they can.

If they can.

Oh, vellers! list to their aims, then bow your heads in wonder!

List to their experiments and their woman-like scientific thunder.

Like thunder.

They have other silly ideas and fantastic notions: One, to straighten out a crooked cork-screw

By the daffy expedient of transmuting and rubbing an old Vassar shrew.

Vassar shrew.

And I hear tell of a NEW PRODUCT which they call a madame-wiggly guinea pig,

Which they have invented by stuffing an over-sized sausage with a guinea pig.

Guinea pig.

And they have the queerest notion about the broad and wide stormy ocean

Which they expect to swim underwater all the way—if they can.

If they can!

But vellers! this is not all these stf Vassar fans expect to do.

Expect to do.

I hear tell of a prize 'flily' who made a date with a 'guinea pig'

To be experimentally matrimonified in order to produce a gastric living BEM!

Living BEM!

Their scientific experiments and unheard-of wonders

are all the rage; to the rage: to the rage: to the rage: They hope some fine day to produce a vocal talking page—so they say.

So they say.  
They've got the oddest notion that they'll dry up all the oceans  
And create a Paradise on earth from all the muck by and by.  
Bye and bye.

They would forsake the world and all its men to found a desert island in the oceanic retreat  
Away from all society, plying and applying their knowledge of feminine intuition in the far off Pacific.

Far off Pacific.  
But they haven't got the faintest notion what lies in store for them in our swimming TWS ocean  
Which they had better not try to cross and pan and dun and pun:

If they can.  
We'll dun their puns and snipes and snides with s-wipes and s-wives,  
If we can.

And leave it to Ye Editor their perfumed lines to indite and cathectize.

Cathectize.  
With a Sneary-sneering frantic-jabbing jibe and snide, jibe and snide,  
And take our merry leave of these Vassar gals when it's high tide.

High tide, my eye!  
\*With due apologies to the firm of G. and S., Corps. Dissolved.

Forsoth, Master, herewith is mine examination paper and hope I doth (grade) as an humble apprenticeship am I pass the grade in all perplexity.—9618 Digby Place, Ozone Park, 17, N.Y.

Dear heaven—if by G. and S. you mean the late Sir W. S. Gilbert and the equally late Sir Arthur Sullivan you are due for a double-haunting, Chris. As for grading your alleged examination paper, well—

At a beaten-up desk a spent editor sat  
Poor feller, poor feller, poor feller  
Trying vainly to handle his chores with eclat

Poor feller, poor feller, poor feller  
When along come a missive from old Ozone Park

That made him wish he did his work in the dark

For he didn't believe there could be such a jark

As Keller, as Keller, as Keller.

With which we'll leave the firm of G. and S. alone for awhile. And Vassar too—though on second thought, why?

## AND WE ASKED FOR MORE POETRY!

by Hugh McInnis

Dear Ed: I enjoyed the April ish very much, especially the extra pages. Just one question—what will this do to the loyal readers who have subscriptions which still have some time to run under the old rates (mine still has over a year, old schedule)? Will this cut down the no of issues on our subscriptions?

I have a special reason for asking you to print this letter (as if you wouldn't anyway). I have already told (by letter) our friendly twelve-year-old Michael Wigodsky to look for it. You can leave this paragraph out of publication with my blessings if you wish.

The letter section was tops as usual.  
To Art Rapp, you lucky, lucky creature. They actually compared your letter with mine.

In answer to Mike (I suppose that's what his friends ((if any)) call him) Wigodsky's answer to Gene Hyde's answer to Edmond Hamilton's story "Come Home From Earth" in the Feb. ish. Dear Mike: I have

taken your suggestion to heart, and I have written (by the time you finish this, you will probably be about ready to take me on in a 69 round bare-knuckle exhibition bout) that 99,000 word short-short story, *Just for you*. Of course we can't expect ye Ed to publish the whole thing, so I have condensed it for publication here. Also, just to please ye Ed, I have set it to rhyme. Well, here's the story:

The Title "Elin, Bam, BEM, or 12,903 Reasons Why I Like Some On My Super Whoost."

Boy meets girl.  
Gets in a whirl,  
And loves her from the start.  
Girl goes away  
Which will you say  
Tend to rend the twain apart.

Boy chases girl,  
Gives her a pearl  
And strives to win her to 'em;  
And then my frien'  
They marry when.  
The Lilacs (Martian version of course)  
start to bloom.

Well, how's this for revenge, eh Ed?—Hugh McInnis, c/o Y M C A, Warren, Ark.

Well, Hugh, I say, it goes this way—revenge is sweet but not from you, so why not dip your head in glue? Or if you find you'd rather fake it—then tapioca ought to make it. And for your information, Gate, your sub runs out at same old rate. Selah!

## HAULING OFF

by Ed Cox

Dear Editor: I hauled off the wrapper and there it was. The new, large-sized TWS for April. That reminds me, I didn't mention how much I liked the large size when I wrote to STARTLING STORIES. It is nice to have much more reading matter in the mag. And as you said, there is a wider choice of stories to pick from when one is reading. Luckily I can sit down and read almost the whole magazine at one sitting. Now on to the current issue.

COVER: Well, the dame's presence is almost inevitable but the cover is good and the cube-headed guys from the lead story look quite gruesome. Congratulate Earle K. for me, will you?

NOVEL: THE FACELESS MEN This story was pretty good and one of the few by Zagat I've seen lately. It was almost as long as the novel in SS last issue. There was one thing in this story that irritated me, as it does when I see it in any story. I quote, "... his fingers brushed hers and an electric tingle prickled up his arms." Unquote. Oh, yes, don't ever forget the electric tingle! Ghaaaa. I But the story was good, though.

THIEVES OF TIME: Hmm, it seems that we're getting stories from a lot of the what you call—"the old guard" authors, lately. This story was one of the best of the issue but wasn't the ending sort of crowded? It seemed like he was timing himself and was a little late near the end of the story.

DUP: This was also a very good story. I'm not going to start a new rating system. I'll use the good old A B C system. This story rates a B.

THE WORLD OF WULKINS: Ahh, the fantasy, or should I say horror story, of the issue. Written in his usual good horror style, too. This one rates a B plus.

PILE OF TROUBLE: Egads, are we going to have a series of these too?!? Oh, well, secretly, I like them. This was better than his first Hogben story. Also a B plus.

GENTLEMEN, THE SCAVENGERS! Ah, this is another good one and by Jacobi, too. I've been wondering where he's been. This gets an A-.

A PROBLEM IN ASTROGATION: How did that get in? Does Matt Lee have something on you or something? Hmm, I see a way to make a little dough. If you print something like this, why I guess I'll send you one of mine. It would be just dandy to fill up a couple of pages. D-.

A DOG'S LIFE: Well, well, what have we here? Smith doing something like this? No! Insane dogs yet! Oh, well, C-.



**ILLUSTRATIONS:** As usual they were very well done good. Finlay's for the lead story were very well done but the subject for the one on page 13 was lousy. When are your two mags going to grow up? Otherwise good pics are all fouled up by having the dames running around trying to catch pneumonia. Most of the other pics were pretty good, ranging from Finlay and Stevens down to the little one for Lee's short.

I must confess that I didn't read the article. Now on to the book review. I'm glad that you have this in this mag. It makes up for the lack of a fanzine department, which, of course, **STARTLING** has. I'm quite interested in that first book you reviewed. I might even get it!

Quickly disposing of that I'll now go on to the letter column. There is a conspicuous absence of letters from Maine fans in the letter columns of TWS and SS. In the last six years there have been only two letters from Maine fans in **THE READER SPEAKS**. One of them was in last issue's TRS. What's wrong with you Maine fans anyway? Come on, get those letters in! And write to me, too. Russ Woodman and I aren't the only fans in Maine!

I noticed that there are three letters from England this time. I'm glad that they are able to get the mags to write about. What?! Arthur H. Rapp wants to exclude fannies? I wonder what he'll think of Wigodsky's letter in this ish?

Peter Leyva—Hooray for the BEMS! I'm with you! Let's have a nice, horrible bem on the next cover, Ed.

Paul Anderson—What? Are there records like that? The names, I mean. Hmm. . . I guess so. The Ed. answered as if there must be.

Michael Wigodsky—You wanna watch out, bub. You're gonna wake up dead one of these mornings at the rate you're going now!

I was going to devote a line or two to each letter, but I guess I just can't. I was also going to include a little poem but after that one I sent to SS, I'd better let well enough alone.

Oh, boy! A whole Bradbury novelet next time! Shurp! I'm drooling in anticipation. It's not often we get a novelet from him. Also, I'll be glad when we get another story from Leigh Brackett.

Well, my fan', I'll end this thing now. You'll hear from me after every issue of TWS and SS from now on. It's inevitable. Horrible thought, isn't it.—4 Spring Street, Lubec, Maine.

You should know better than to ask for a BEM. It's odds-on you'll get one. You've doubtless read that Brackett arrives in TWS come next issue. You'll be seeing Bradbury in same right along now. Incidentally, what is the matter with you Maine fans?

## HOGBEN HOG PEN

by James Goldfrank

Dear (?) Editor: You said I should learn to space better on this typer. Well? Didn't I? Anyway u hurt my feelings. SnifSnif. (NO SPACE MEANT THERE). On top of insult—injury. The so-called editorial foot must do the typesetting. WoodmEre spoiled WoodmOre. The cover wonderful!!!! History it is making. Best one in such a long time. The Best Story? Pile of Trouble. I hope to see the Highbens like Bud Gregory or Oona. Yessir, NSMT (see above). I never thought Hank was too good on short stories. Now, Good. Leyva wrote the best letter (after mine) on the way we treat the poor Bems. Let GOM, the Ghoulish Octopoid Monster, take their place. Give 'em a rest. GOMBY—1116 Fulton St., Woodmere, N. Y.

You beefers on Henry Kuttner as a short story writer should dig back to the 1943 Winter issue of the late CAPTAIN FUTURE. Hank there had a story called **BETTER THAN ONE** which Ye Ed. still considers an sf classic. One of the funniest yarns ever written.

As for improving your spacing, Jimmy, why don't you instead of just talking about it? Or is it beyond your powers?

## AND MAYBE WE AREN'T

by Mary Jane Gholson

Dear Editor: Having reached the age (ripe old, that is) of fifteen years I have decided to write a real genuine fan letter. I don't suppose you'll print it—but I may dream, can't I? (Ask your psychiatrist about that—Ed.)

This issue of TWS was velly, velly nice. Not as good as the December number but nice. The new large size is wonderful, no less. **THE FACELESS MEN** wasn't bad at all. I hope you won't spoil the current run of good novels with another **CAP FUTURE**. I honestly don't see how any intelligent human being and anyone who reads stf ought to have a few brains) can read and enjoy that junk.

**THE WORLD OF WULKINS** was swell. Definitely the best story in the issue. And who did the lovely, lovely pic on 102-3?

**DUD AND THIEVES OF TIME** were very nice reading. **THIEVES'** ending is a laugh though. Surely Mr. Burks (whoever he may be) doesn't seriously think that Kilian's little gadget would establish peace. And his naive little idea of turning it over to the "Great Powers"—yuk, yuk, yuk!

The short stories were mostly worthless, though Kuttner's hill billies were swell fun. Tell George O. (for Odious?) Smith to stick to engineering or whatever it is he specializes in.

**THE READER SPEAKS** was wonderful! Sometimes it's better and sometimes it's worse, but in this issue it hits an all-time (as far as I know) high. I love Rick Sney. Doesn't anybody ever give him a spelling book?

Hooray for Peter Leyva and his defense of the unlovely and unloved BEM. I'd have done it myself, Pete, only I was scared.

Wigodsky nauseates me. Nobody has a right to be so bright and self-satisfied as the tender (?) age of 12 (Don't get me wrong, Mike, that's just my inferiority complex speaking). At least his latest letter is a change from his usual six-liner. Where does he learn the big words?

I don't see much point in arguing about H. P. (for Hippockets) Lovcraft. Either you like him or you don't and that's that. Me, I like him. Poe too. I'll argue about Poe.

I want to air my theory about why you are anonymous. **MAYBE YOU ARE MARCHIONI!!!!!!?** And speaking of pics, may I ask who did that nice little thing on page 81? and—hmmmm—that Finlay on 60-61—sort of repulsive, isn't it? Oh well—Bor# 228 McLeansboro, Illinois.

Verne Stevens did the pic on 102-3—surely you should be able to spot his pen-and-ink technique by this time, Mary Jane. Braun committed page 81 as previously mentioned. And if we are **MARCHIONI**, perhaps you are just an Anglicized version of the Spanish edition of your first two names. Is that dopey! Seriously, lay off our anonymity!

## EBEY TIDE

by George Ebey

Proe't! Ebey is i-cumen in. . . And as my hyper-sclerotic eyes slither around the April issue of TWS they brillig into none other than Messrs. Zagat, Burks and Jacob—fances from the past, no less. One might come to the conclusion that their varied contributions also hark back to the thirties, when they made regular appearances in the Thrilling group. While I didn't particularly dislike the "Men", the "Thieves", and the

"Scavengers" I didn't find them anything out of the ordinary. Not like the stuff we've been getting of late. In fact, I'm thinking that these three yarns are part of an old backlog somebody dredged up.

Incidentally I've rigged up something new in the way of a check-list. This is Ebey's Pocket Poll or something; simplicity incarnate. Anyone can own one. Works like this: I read an issue of any magazine once, from cover to cover, and then write down the names of the stories contained with the author's names included. (I use an old paper match folder for this purpose.) An hour later I check through the names and see if I can remember what the stories were about.

For instance, I look inside my folder and see "Problem in Astrogration" by Matt Lee. "Aha," I cry, "that's the one about the family that brought the robot which transported them into another dimension and then one of 'em became a dog which was also a genius invented an atomic pile which transported them back home again only they didn't have any faces afterward." And because I remember how the story went, just from reading the title, I know it was a good story. This is the simplest method of criticism I have yet run across.

Now, in a past issue of this magazine, one Tom Pace (if I recall correctly) went to the trouble of requesting an elaboration on my statement that Fitzgerald ought to be ashamed of the Bud Gregory stories. (I hope I have all these names straight and that it isn't the other way around.) Tom makes it a direct question; a direct answer on my part would entail three pages of steady vituperation. So-o-o-o. . . Whatever charm the Gregory series possesses lies in its characterization of a hill-billy genius—the rest being stale icing on the cake. Now the idea of an ignorant Einstein is hardly new in sf; Fitzgerald should surpass earlier efforts by a better, more rounded and more convincing characterization. Note the word "convincing". The character of Gregory does not seem convincing to me.

So somebody asks, "How many hill-billy geniuses do you know, chum?" And I say, "None." Which is precisely why Bud Gregory doesn't ring true to me and precisely why the character should ring true. Truth is that few readers of the series will have known what hill billys or geniuses are like in their native habitat.

If they did know it would be easier to construct such characters because the readers would be able to fill in the gaps. I don't know what HB-G's are like and after reading Fitzgerald I still don't know. So we are getting chalk for cheese in Bud Gregory and Fitzgerald should be ashamed. Feel any better, Tom?

My general feeling on this April issue is that it is fairly average. Even the Hogbens seemed a trifle attenuated. And the verse in The Reader Speaks is getting genteel . . . moldymoldymoldy. . .

Now the Prob. in Astrogration

Caused a slight rectification

And Smitty's canine woes were kind of quaint.

But when Kuttner dally-dillies

With his superman hill billys

It seems I've got a justified complaint.

Sure: the first yarn had no equal

But it didn't need a sequel.

I want the series speeded to a halt.

For the sake of Hank and Wonder

Put the Hogbens six foot under

And let the readers know it's Saturn's fault!

—346 West 17th Street, New York City.

"Oh, the night was thick and hazy when the  
the Piccadilly Daisy

Went down with both the captain and the  
crew."

Now it really don't amaze me but I think I'm  
going crazy

After studying that double verse by you.

While the meter isn't wobblin', still it really  
is a'habblin'

Unlike its use by Charles Carrol of yore

For unless you think we're bobblin' 'tis from  
DAVY AND THE GOBLIN

When that Crusoe man recited by the  
shore.

And so you find it silly, to give to a hill billy  
The genius that Fitzgerald gives to Bud,  
Well, we find your comment chilly, and  
therefore willy nilly  
Wish you'd no more turn out such awful  
crud!

## AGAIN—THAT DOWNEY ONE

by John Van Couvering

Dear Ed: "Ignatz!" I cried sharply. "What have you got there?" He jumped guiltily and crawled out of the oven.

"Aw, boss," he placated, "it's only a little old TWS . . ."

"And what have I told you about aforementioned slimy rag?" I asked pointedly.

"Yeahhhh. . ." He muttered resignedly. "But—"

"But me no buts," I snarled, cuffing his left head sharply. "Gimme!"

"You've been . . . in this oven two hours or better, you sneak," I rasped, "What's the matter, your ESP slowing up on you?" Ignatz was a Martian BEM I had rescued from a Hamilton novel and, as a matter of course, had telepathy. He was about house-

broken, save for scorched spots on the upholstery.

"It's that %\$#! new size," he growled. "148 pages!

For . . ."

"That makes no difference," I admonished with a frown. "I have told you time and time again that

TWS and young BEMs don't—uhh—new size? Instead of taking your hot-water bottle away, I'll demonstrate the evils of this mag."

"But, boss, I already—" he began.

"Shut up. First, let's take the cover. Ummmm. Ummmm. Ee-hem! Krr. Notice the vicious draw-

ing . . . the curve of the—uh—the demoralizing looseness of that heavenly gown . . . Errr. Ignatz,

this cover is the typical low-minded work of art—er—scrawling daub that abounds on science-fiction magazines everywhere. Never let me catch you looking at another. If I do I'll have to take it away."

"And then what?" asked Ignatz, enjoying my discomfiture.

"Never mind. Next we find the lead story. Hmmmm. I mean, Humph! Finlay. Untalented scribbler. Ignatz,

you're burning something. Cool off."

"That's not me," said Ignatz meaningfully.

"Oh. Hum. Well . . . What a title! THE FACELESS MEN. Fooey. Hmmm. I wonder what a faceless man would be. I bet it says in the story . . . Hmmm. More Finlay. Not bad. I mean, it's bad. Crummy stuff, eh, Ignatz?"

"No," said Ignatz bluntly.

Ignoring him, I went on. "THIEVES OF TIME. Burks. See, Ignatz. Typical confused, involved,

scientific, well-written, high-grade stuff. Tripe."

"I liked it," Ignatz declared rashly.

"Silence, peasant," I ordered. "Who's panning this mag—you or me?" I flicked cold water on him, and he sizzled uncomfortably.

"Amadeus Rafferty . . . humph. But he's got the dope on the latest in rockets. I must admit. But

he's too dry and serious. Fooey!"

Ignatz sneered openly. "What are you reading it for if you don't like it?" he asked foolishly. He disappeared through the window as I began to reach for a fire extinguisher. I read on, muttering to myself

"GENTLEMEN, THE SCAVENGERS! Not bad, not bad at all. But of course it's unsuited for Ignatz's juvenile mind. There's a woman in it! Ummm . . . but she doesn't say much. Nor do much. Fudgy story. Gnats!

"Hogbens again. I suppose it's supposed to be funny. Let's see. Eh. Heh. Yuk. Hehe. YAWWW—HAWWWW!! Hee hee hee. HA. HAW HAW. . . WHOOOOEYYYY!!

HEE. Chuekie. Yukyukyuk. Heh. Hump. Uh. . . Kuttner is a terrible humorist."

"I think he's funny," stated Ignatz, appearing in midair outside the window. "Look. Saunk Hegben knew his business. It's easy." He floated in.

"You're not funny," I said. "You know darn well that's impossible. Quit it."

"Spoil-spoiled," pouted Ignatz, dropping to the floor. "What's the rest of the evil mag like?"

"DUD is." I couldn't resist the obvious. If authors

don't want their stories to be panned, why give them such irresistible and obvious titles?"

"I liked it," maintained Ignatz stoutly. "No Earth-women. And MARTIANS in it."

"You're no 18-foot snake and you hate water. Call yourself a Martian."

"I think I am. At least my mother was. Now, my father—"

"Skip it. PROBLEM IN ASTROGATION. Foocy. Everyone knows when you exceed light you go into the future, 1851. Foocy."

"Foocy to you," sneered Ignatz. "They were smart. They went to Mars in the end."

"Serves 'em right," I sneered back. "WORLD OF WULKINS and DOG'S LIFE . . . huh. What did you think?"

"Who, me? How should I know? I been reading your mind all along."

"A TYPICAL MARTIAN TRICK!" I roared, infuriated beyond measure. "For that, you contemptible little salamander, I'm going to lock the furnace at night!"

"Aw, boss," he whined, turning pale (green). "Not that. I'll never steal your TWS again."

"Steal MY TWS!! YOU DIDN'T!" Appalled beyond reason, I rushed for my room. Sure enough, the thing was gone from under my pillow, I had been betrayed! And when I got back, Ignatz had retired to the furnace to read it and unfortunately burned the thing to a crisp in the process.

So you see my predicament. Here I am, my only copy of TWS burned, and I only have fifteen cents to my name! EDITOR, PLEASE . . . FIFTEEN CENTS AGAIN?

No?  
Oh, well, that's life. I mean, that's what I'm going to buy instead. LIFE. That'll learn you, you mean old editor, you.—10358 South Downey Avenue, Downey, California.

We haven't run such a letter since we outlawed the old-fashioned Blue BEM special. But for some reason we found it amusing. All we hope is it doesn't start an epidemic so we have to shut down on the things again. We're thinking of conferring the Grulzak Cross of the Order of Joe Kennedy on Van Couvering for this one. A most Ignatziating hunk of fanhakk.

## ASTRA IN BRIEF

by Marion (Astra) Zimmer

Dear Editor: So Ye Olde Thrilling Wonderful is on the stands again. There's an end to all my trouble, there's an end to all my pain. I plunk down fifteen cents, and I see the nickel boost! I wonder if it's worth it to get off Earth's old rooster. I look inside the contents page, and decide it's rather nice; what with Kuttner, Smith and Jacobi, I gladly pay the price.

Oh, but the Bergey is a terror, and the Finlays reek with Gals; so I quickly find the Reader Squeaks to read my stylish pals. So Linda Blake she likes my letters? Give the gal a hand. But she never answers when I write, so leave her where she stand. Tom Pace; agree on Kuttner, but again, that's all old stuff; where friend Henry is concerned the fans just cannot get enough!

Poul Anderson is clever; he rates a hearty scream. The kid's an author too, you know, he's right there on the beam. I guess this better be enough of this impromptu rime. I've given you enough to do, so turn prose-alc for a time. No, I forgot to mention, Indian Zimmer is no joke. An ancestress of mine's full-blooded Indian, you bloke!

Here's a new system for story rating.  
WORTH CUTTING A CLASS TO READ (Not that I really do cut the class, but it would be worth it!)  
File of Trouble, by Hank Kuttner.

Gentlemen, the Savengers  
WORTH FORGETTING HOMEWORK TO READ  
Dud, The World of Wulkins

HAVE TO WAIT FOR A FREE SUNDAY  
A Dog's Life, Thieves of Time

I'D RATHER GO TO MATH CLASS (and I hate math)

The Faceless Men. This was plotless, overburdened with a love angle, stupid and, what's more, an echo of "When New York Vanished," by Ed Hamilton, published ten years ago in Startling. Let's not start a Hall of Fame in TWS!

If that isn't an original way of rating the stories I'll eat a copy of TWS covers and all. I can use Bergey's lurid red covers for catsup. And don't say I make you retch, you wretch! R. F. D. #1, East Greenbush, N. Y.

Well, Marion, your rating system downs us with a thud, but for all that it's nice to know your ancestress had blood. For although in our heading we termed your letter brief, it managed 'spite its shortness to bring us lots of grief. So why not cut your classes, excepting only math—and treated thus emerge in time a full-fledged psychopath.

## SPARE THAT WOODMAN!

by Russell Harold Woodman

Dead Ed: A scientist recently compiled evidence and statistics which have received much attention from the slick magazines; a book showing that the average American male is, in sexual behavior, even more wild than the savages.

Moral digression is obviously the current trend and has been for sometime. Women, for example, who leave their children outside a saloon are merely typical and will not attract much attention in this modern age of industrialization, where machines do the hard work and nobody does hard thinking.

Man mouths the desire for peace as he did in the days of Plato, using the same dull phrases, speaking with the identical false sincerity. But we see wars, wars on all sides of us and a bigger one coming nearer.

Science fiction fans have intense imagination, and so they alone can conceive a happy outcome to this state of affairs. I suggest as my opinion that we are the dinosaurs of the coming millennium: that we people with war instincts that cannot be submerged even in the liveliest politician's speech can rest assured that a better form of life will follow after we are gone and forgotten, along with all our warlike records and documents. I suggest that a form of pure thought, endowed with life, will arise and thrive on the very same radiation waves that will shortly extinguish us.

Civilization as we know it may well be but the dinosaur stage preceding something finer, cleaner, more beautiful. 505A Washington Avenue, Apartment 7, Portland, Maine.

You could be right, Russell, but if thought is to be so pure in the future it's going to be awfully, awfully dull. Happy thought—perhaps things might be better if the mothers took their babies inside the saloons with them. Then the little tykes wouldn't feel so left out of things and develop complexes. Wonder what the dinosaurs did. . . .

## MONGOLD IS WHERE YOU FIND IT

by Henry E. Mongold

Dear Ed: I haven't been reading your twin mags for some time, but I find they now impress me much better than they used to.

"The Faceless Men" is as good a scientific adventure story as I have ever read. I was really quite delighted. I like plots where you aren't sure who's on

your side (i.e., the hero's) and who isn't. "Does he know more than he seems to?" "Is he trying to get me wrecked?" "Is this part of the plan or has there been a short-circuit?" And other like queries. I mean that's the type of tale for me. Stories in which Evil is absolute, as in theology, where the villain is marked with black ribbons from the start, where the Bad Men are all bad and no good—these I only put up with. In real life everyone has his side of the question, just as both Kozmers did. The one we want to see defeated is the one whose activities cause the most trouble in the long run.

"Pile of Trouble" is good enough to take second place. Has just the right sauntering stride most of the way. Burks' story takes third, but your type-setter must have got tired. Apparently "Procras" is the spelling that finally won out.

I don't like horror stories, and I'm tired of sentimental remarks on the "different" world of a child. Therefore "The World of Wulkins" takes last place in this issue. I liked "Gentlemen, the Scavengers" very much. "Dud" has a number of flaws, one being the non-necessity of keeping the motors running once a space ship gets away from major bodies. (At least they wouldn't run except to counter various gravitational effects, I'd think.) I assume the drawings in Rafferty's article are genuine ideas of the past. I liked this feature.

Don't listen to complaints about girls on your covers. They look fine to me. Marchioni used to draw stylized girls that made me tired, but his pic in this issue (the girl-less) is OK. Finley, of course, does very nicely, but I don't like his and Bergey's conception of jagged rocks in a river. After all, there is usually erosional effect. When I saw the cover I thought it represented a flood that covered all but the peaks of newly broken mountain crags. I have never seen rocks like that in water.—616 Franklin Street, Burlington, Iowa.

We've had the rocks come on out of the water for your benefit, Harry. But one thing puzzles us—if you haven't read us for some time, how can you compare us with our own grisly past—to say nothing of reviewing the stories in the April issue so pleasantly? Seriously, thanks for the crumbs of kindness. Our head is both bowed and bloody after what we've been taking.

## FOR WHOM THE BELL ZOLLS

by Daniel Zoll

Dear Ed: I decided ages ago that I was too lazy to ever actually write (love those split infinitives) "letters to the editor—any editor—even in my favorite contemporary literary field, in spite of the fact that I realized I had the necessary wit (sic) and brilliance (sic, sic) to far outshine (there I go again) the ordinary fan or (letter-back).

Then IT happened. Without further preliminaries, I shall tell you of that which has set my mind adrift at the hinges, of that which has broken the heretofore inviolable vow of silence that my torpid spirit has enforced on me.

Why is the throat of the girl on the Bergey cover (TWS, Apr.) naked? bare, uncovered, one might almost say nude, while the throat of the girl in the Finley illustration on page 19 which, mind you, differs in no other material respect from the Bergey cover (or the part of it that needs most concern us here) is covered by a two-strand necklace?

The possibilities here are manifold; but I'll be darned if I'll be bothered typing them out (you have only your own editorial stubbornness to blame). If you have enough imagination, you can tap the same unbounded inexhaustible stream of pure thought (if you've managed to follow me) that I tapped; if of course a certain author who shall be nameless because I'm not going to look him up, is right.

What's the story of this girl, then? If you refuse to answer I'll take it as irrefutable confirmation of a long-held theory of mine, to wit: that Bergey is blackmailing you.

I was originally going to write a post-card (why didn't you? Ed.) but a combination of factors made me decide on a letter. Relief at the thought that my end-of-semester finals are over, exposure to the Philcon and the desire to impress my friends when I hit print also motivated me. And who knows, I might discover who buys all the s-f mags in Iowa City. I also dislike the disappearance from the newsstands fast enough.

This shall now go the way of all fan letters and attempt to rate the stories (from what I can remember since my roommate won't put my TWS down long enough to even tell me he won't give it back till he's done).

Faceless Men—Not too bad, but I get so tired of heroes who always save civilization almost in spite of themselves and the "velvet lips" that they so illogically fall in love with at almost the first chapter and whom they (these unassprechlich dull heroes) know they will win in the last chapter. In fact, they don't even have to have an affaire de coeur—if they save civilization that's three strikes against them, the story and the mag. I assume the author actually knows better.

I also dislike stories where the lone stolen from another story (in this case the shutting off of an entire city by a sphere of force, stolen from a Sturgeon story, I believe) is not improved upon. Smith's Quarantine certainly improved on van Vogt's Juggernaut.

Thieves of Time—Rather good. Killion (how that name sounds like "million"), any relation to Daddy Warbucks? Unlike the usual Nietzschean irrationalist, recognizes the flaw in one-man control. However the story itself is a little too much like the early type of science-fiction story in that it tries to expound on a theme rather than tell a story using that theme as a basic assumption. Like Bellamy's Looking Backward, Burks is writing a doctrine, not telling a tale. However, he tried.

Dud—Cowboys and Indians, but beguiling. World of Wulkins—A well-wrought, well-told tale, but then Long is an old experienced hand at this sort of thing and I expected something with a little more depth to it. He has been writing weird and sf long enough to do more than just set up an interesting (I meant to say intriguing) situation and go on from there. I didn't like his ending.

Pile of Trouble—I always like Kuttner. This story is an improvement over the first in the series, but not a great one. The basic concepts of this series are very good, the plots and developments poor.

Gentlemen, the Scavengers—Gentlemen, the cowboys. Only not quite. While the Sergeant Quirt and Captain Flag (or was it the other way around) influence and the Horatius at the bridge influence are present and though the story suffers accordingly, there is a certain residue of good writing. But what else should we expect from Jacob. What I said for Long goes for him too (and several other writers).

Problem in Astrogratation—Neat. I liked it. I assume that it is the continuation of the policy started with the Heinlein short short of a few issues back.

A Dog's Life—Hummum, Smith. Don't get me wrong I like his work. I even like him, which might come as a surprise to him if he happens to remember how I laughed when he nearly electrocuted himself at the Philcon. I liked this story. Real clever. But you, Mr. Burns, how could you do what you did in that book review. I don't take issue with your critical opinion because of course that's your own and I have no right to interfere with your personal opinion. I do, however, disagree. But how could you write your review, based I assume on a reading of the book, and confuse Burbank with Kingman and Murdoch? Burbank, if memory serves, appeared in only one story.

I liked Man's Journey to the Stars for its style. There were a couple of places where the dead-pan satire (would you call it that?) broke down. Who really wrote it? Will he repeat this triumph of historicity?

McIntally—I would appreciate any correspondence, but I make this warning: I am the arch-procrastinator of all time (and space, I might add) and a letter written to me in May, might not receive an answer till August.

Wigodsky, sometimes I think you are only 12. Take warning, I am only 6.

You know, my first reaction on seeing this month's issue was "I knew it couldn't last." But you know, Ed, you did to a good job. I think if a poll had been taken during these several months dating from the Jerry was a Man issue TWS would have received top billing among the prozines. Go ahead, Ed., do it again.

This Dear Ed. is my first letter and since it is possibly my last letter, I hope you'll feel free to comment on it freely.—711 E. Jefferson St., Iowa City, Iowa. Summer Address: 207 Fuller St., Brookline, Mass.

It would be no less than churlish of us to refuse so pressing an invitation, so—let's sharpen our ray-guns and get going.

The necklace problem is easily settled. Our young lady stopped at Simpson's before doing the retake on page 19 and got her necklace out of hock. All right, can you think of a better one?

We can ourselves, but not here.

What's with this velvet lip stuff? Doesn't the nap get in your teeth? For your private files the author of MAN'S JOURNEY TO THE STARS was—Dr. Amadeus Rafferty—but don't ask us who he is! In the review, we didn't mean Burbank. We were thinking of George Washington Carver. Ran into him on a three-cent stamp lately. According to well-founded rumor, he's the man who invented the peanut and therefore kept big-league baseball going. No wonder they put him on a stamp.

For the rest—well, next time you write us without checking the spelling we'll give you the Sneary treatment.

## PLAINTIVE HALF-NOTE

by Russell Claggett

Dear Ed: To paraphrase Joe Kennedy, I am now the Blue (pencil) that is Bum. How could you do it, Editor? You should have at least printed half of my letter. You must not realize the wear and tear on my index finger, typing these things. Oh well, such is life, etc. etc. and so on to the main topic of my missive.

I was somewhat surprised that there was practically no comment on S. V. McDaniel's "elf on a baton" in the current TWS. I was rather busy sticking verbal pot-shots myself when S. V.'s original statements were printed, so I couldn't take time to let fly at Mac. However, since then I have received personal correspondence about it all, and have become interested.

Mac takes an awful lot for granted.

If you remember, the idea was that if a tiny elf were perched on the tip of a conductor's baton and, if the baton were moved in an arc at a steady rate of time, as the elf moved toward the conductor's hand the length of the arc he would travel would be shorter and shorter. S. V. said this could be set up in a formula (he neglected to mention what this equation was) in which time would be a constant, and the length of the arc a variable. He then stated, and this is the main point of his story, if this equation could be changed around, time made the variable and distance the constant, we would then have a formula for traveling thru time.

Mr. M. has come up with a masterpiece of obtuseness. The whole is so muddled, a complete analysis is necessary in order to really understand the situation.

First of all, no conductor ever wiggles a baton in that fashion; he moves his whole arm. This, of course, is relatively unimportant, however it does simplify matters to state that McDaniel was actually talking about a metronome (one of those ticking gadgets that beats time for a musician while he practices). To further simplify matters, I have drawn a diagram:



As can be seen from the diagram, the rod moves thru angle ABC. If the elf were at point F (farthest) he would travel thru arc AFC. At point H (halfway), he'd move thru arc DHE. McDaniel was right when he said that a formula can be set up to find the length of these arcs, or any other arc between F and B, and that formula is the one used to find the length of an arc of a circle, given radius and angle. My geometry is a little rusty. I've been out of school longer that Wigodsky has been alive (if you call that being alive), but here is an equation that will work:

$$L_a = \frac{2\pi r \times \text{angle ABC}}{360}$$

where  $L_a$  is the length of the arc to be found and  $r$  is the radius of the circle of which  $L_a$  is part of the circumference. Stated another way, the ratio of the arc to the rest of the circumference of which it is a part, is equal to the ratio of angle ABC to the rest of the angles in the circle. (All angles in a circle add up to 360 degrees).

Thus you can see that time is not even in the formula. FOR TIME IS INCIDENTAL, AND CAN ONLY DETERMINE THE SIZE OF ANGLE ABC! In fact, a metronome can be constructed that swings thru the same angle at all speeds and in this case even angle ABC would be entirely independent of time. In any case, the tempo can be varied, so time is not truly a constant, like pi for instance, or the 360 degrees in every circle.

Yesir, McDaniel takes a lot for granted. He's a good guy tho; he certainly peps up this column. Long may he rave!—3508 Harford Road, Baltimore 8, Maryland.

You take A, juggle it lightly, put the weight on your left leg, cuddling A in the hollow of the neck with the palm of the hand—then shift the weight forward rapidly, taking care not to foul out of the circle, and heave. Unfortunately, if you don't heave, it could happen to us.

Why didn't we cut this letter! Maybe the erosion of your index finger is taking away all the topsoil, but that's nothing to what your missive is doing to us. And how about Stokowski and Bernstein, who don't use batons at all?

## AMUSING, DELIGHTFUL AND INTERESTING!

by Mrs. Eva Firestone

Dear Editor: Your department, in April, 1948, Thrilling Wonder Stories, Letters From The Readers, was the most amusing, delightful and interesting I have ever had the pleasure to read. And, Oh, the Editor's comments! Also—Ah, that story by Henry Kuttner! I would like a sequel. Please, Mr. Kuttner.

The April issue of TWS was the first one to appear in Upton; How Come? Have you back issues in stock I may buy?

Have you had such an exciting letter dept. every



month? What is the name of the Editor who gave all those "Spicey, Cream in our Coffee" answers? I hunted high and low, all thru the magazine, but could not find him. Do I need new glasses?

How about having a cover now and then with painting of a space ship, a flying disc, or any kind of machinery, MINUS the curved humanity. Could be a blessing to tired eyes; Indeed truly wouldst please this reader greatly.—Upton, Wyoming.

We throw a kiss, madam, in your general direction while your husband is not looking.

## 1.98 CENTS' WORTH

by James E. Hamilton, Jr.

Dear Editor: Have just finished reading the April issue of TWS. So I think I'll put my two cents in. Well, three cents, cause you ain't local correspondence. This town ain't large enough to need any such. You can hunt up the guy in less time than you can write a letter.

I am going to begin with a department I usually ignore, the art. My comment here is very brief. I will confine it to the first inside pic, and all I got to say about that is that if the dame normally ran around like that I'm gonna hire a private eye (no, you can't trust those bums. I'm gonna hunt her up myself. No. I don't think I'll bother. The last time I saw a dame with a face like that we got in a fight. She wanted to play in a faster league than I operate in.) God knows why that parenthesis goes there, unless it's because the one a few lines up looks lonely.

So much for the art. I ain't any %/\* art critic. As for these stories, I'll list them according to the way they run on the contents page.

The Faceless Men, by Arthur Leo Zagat. Even if it didn't look like Murray Leinster's Boomerang Circus in that business of the force-field, this story wouldn't rate very high with me. As for what appears to be a swipe of a great idea, that junks the story all the way into the Z-26 minus file as far as I'm concerned. I can write a better story. At least I think I can.

The Eyes of Fire, by Arthur J. Burks. Well, at least it doesn't look like he's taken somebody else's idea and mangled it. But wasn't Killion quite the altruist, though? Not that I frown on a misunderstood altruist as a, shall we say, for want of a better word, villain. Far from it. I merely think that, as long as he was hijacking supplies to save the world, he should have given Queiroz the \$90,000. I don't think a saviour should begin by framing a man for piracy.

Dred, by Kenneth Putnam. A singularly appropriate title. Since when could the Army revoke a discharge? And, in any event, the story wasn't so hot. I do not see quite how in blazes a simple thing like a charge of neutronium could rip space itself apart. Besides, why didn't Putnam—he, why should I leave the job to Putnam? There's an old saying that, if you want a job well done, do it yourself. Hmm, maybe I will. Maybe I will. And how could anything, much less a wrecked ship, breathe vacuum? Or is that a bit of futuristic slang?

The World of Wulfrims, by Frank Belknap Long. Maybe I'm just stupid, but I can't figure the score on this at all. The contents page lists it as a novelet. Oh well, maybe it is. It's too long for a short story and too short for a novel. But I couldn't see that it hung together.

Pile of Trouble, by Henry Kuttner. Oh no, please! Who let them in again? Henry, if I was Edward Bond-Ganelon, I'd see you for making me put up with these goofs. Okay, so Gandy was a grafter. So does that justify such an inept story. And the characterization! That's what I meant by the remark about Bond-Ganelon.

Gentlemen, the Scavengers, by Carl Jacobi. For this editor, you should ought to meet some scavengers. Vultures, buzzards or condors. Take your pick. They all do a thorough job.

A Problem in Astrogration, by Matt Lee. It may be a problem in astrogration, but it's also a lesson in how not to write a story. It had no plot, it had a lousy ending, and it didn't make sense in the first place. Period. End of sentence.

A Dog's Life, by George O. Smith. Ye Gods! Talking dogs and barking men. Smith must have blown his top at last. And another thing. The hero of *In the Cards* was named Jim Forrest. The first two names of the

hero of *Kingdom of the Blind* were James Forrest. And now the hero (?) of this story is named Jim Forrest. It doesn't add up. Or is Smith building up to something, like one of your competitors did some time back, when a writer built up through three stories and several years to a climactic novel? And the varying themes of these three stories would seem to make that unlikely.

So there it is. One of your worst issues. Well, I always look ahead. If an issue is bad, like this one is, I figure the next one can't be any worse. If an issue is good, as most of them are, I figure the next one might be still better.

But the hour is getting late, I am getting tired and this letter is getting long, so I guess that I'll end it all. Goodby, old friend. Count on hope that this issue is an isolated instance.—Box 145 Hartwick, N. Y.

A good idea that—the one about your ending it all. As for Zagat swiping the force field idea, it seems he more or less promulgated this gadget in the first place, in a semi-classic entitled *THE LANSON SCREEN*. We shall not stoop (tight pants, you see, forbid such posturing) to reply to your other comments. We hope you too are an isolated instance.

## INDIFFERENT

by Edwin Sigler

Dear Editor: Allow me to congratulate you on the improved appearance of your magazine.

Mr. Puce's letter gives me a few bright remarks and says that I would rather have a firearm than a ray pistol. It is a matter of complete indifference to me. In the original letter, which started all this rumpus, I simply wondered why authors insisted upon sticking ray projectors in their stories and ignored the fact that we have weapons in service today that would be perfectly satisfactory for such use.

The development of spaceships and the like will have to take place over a period of centuries and it is a matter of historical fact that the old is displaced by the new only when the new performs more satisfactorily than the old.

Any ray weapon in the future is going to have to take one whole of a lot of abuse when it goes into active service. A modern revolver in a test withstood a dynamite explosion without serious injury. It is obvious that a ray pistol is not going to take anything of that nature as its interior mechanism is too delicate.

To replace a modern pistol, for instance, a ray gun would have to have these characteristics—a range of a full two hundred yards, energy in a narrow beam not more than half a dozen times the diameter it was at the muzzle of the weapon, it would have to be fool-proof and able to take considerable abuse as well as varied climatic conditions. It must be easily reloaded and yet carry a large number of bolts with a means of indicating how many shots are left. It will also have to be no more than a foot in length and weigh no more than three pounds. It will also have to be able to deliver a strong enough blow to cripple without killing.

This is going to require great advances in half a dozen different fields of science and a great complication of coils and switches to be workable. Then it will have to be so designed that extremes of heat and cold do not affect its reliability. After all you don't want to carry a weapon that will go out of order a million miles from nowhere.

However, let us suppose such a device is practical. Just who would use it? Hunters wouldn't, as it would destroy game birds entirely and, used on larger animals, would render them useless either as meat or trophies. In addition, shots that missed would be likely to start brush fires. Target shooters would not use it for a shot at a target, but as a tree, for instance, would be liable to destroy the tree as well.

Neither would city policemen carry them as they would be too dangerous to use. If in a building a chance shot might set the building ablaze. Furthermore, to use one on a fleeing suspect would be unlawful, as there would be no way to stop him without

killing him and that might be very dangerous if the victim were innocent of any offense beyond being scared.

Thus it can be easily seen that there would be many places where our present weapons or improvements on them would still be used where the ray pistol could not.

That was what I was curious about, why authors should insist on sticking ray guns into stories when common sense and the actual time of the yarn would dictate the use of some weapon utilizing gunpowder for a propellant. In such cases the use of ray guns simply makes the story sound less plausible.

There is another matter too. If in the story they use chemical fuels for the rockets, they would not be far enough advanced technically to have ray pistols.

Besides this, history shows that the weapon which is more simple in operation and durable wins out over the fragile device. Hope this clears my position.—1028 N. Broadway, Wichita 5, Kansas.

Too clear, Edwin. Somebody's always taking the joy out of life. Actually, you have made a number of extremely sound points. But isn't it possible that some sort of simple power package may ultimately be developed that will do the trick? Just about everything concrete men imagine ultimately comes true. Why should the practical ray gun be an exception?

## ANTISCAN

by Frank Evans Clark

Dear Editor: Will you please stop yelling about scansion from us fen? I suppose next you'll be wanting that Ood-dad Iambic Pentameter from us! Seriously, though, it is my understanding that rigid scansion and rhythm in poetry are rather passé, that the trend of the moment is toward free verse. So then, poetry becomes not an artfully contrived mechanism put together with hammer and nail, so to speak, but rather a free outburst of feeling, in whatever form it may take, or however clumsy its rhythm.

Poetry's emotional impact comes to me more from its richness and sincerity of expression rather than from its composition and manner of construction. I hope you can see what I mean, I'm expressing it rather poorly. I think you do. Don't make your poetry hide-bound, give us freedom of expression. Read Sandburg's *Jazz Fantasia of Gone* or *"Snatch of Slip-down Jazz"* for examples.

Here's my contribution:

You are  
Nuts,  
You  
Are nuts,  
You  
Are  
Nuts,  
On the subject of Scansion!

No hard feelings, huh?

Besides, it's hard for me to understand scansion!

Most likely that's the real reason for this letter.

I do appreciate all the trouble you go to answer us in verse than scans; from the look of the section of scansion in my *English Versification* it's mighty tough to make a verse that scans perfectly. But then, you get paid for it and we don't!—113 Central Avenue, Baldwin, Long Island, New York.

The writing of a verse to scan  
Is never hard for those who can,  
But, oh, to hear Clark, F. E., pant  
Since he belongs to those who can't.  
Toward awkward meters he is pro  
He's just the lad to make them so.  
Iambic pent, it not our best  
We'd rather have an anapest.  
Which is rather like riding a corduroy road  
Or Krupa with hiccups to give him a goad.

## FIVE-YEAR ITCH

by Ila Workman

Dear Editor: I have been reading TWS for about five years, and SS for the last year. (Startling did not appear on the newstands here during the war.) But this is the first time I have ever written a fan letter, and it will probably be the last.

I would like to congratulate you on a consistently fine magazine, or rather two of them.

The first thing I read in either magazine is the Reader's column. I enjoy it immensely, especially letters from your "Regulars", Sneyer, Pace, Oliver, the Kennedys, etc. I think perhaps the greatest improvement was when you fired Sargent Saturn. Thanks for that.

My favorite author is Edmond Hamilton—both his novels and his short stories are excellent. I'll never forget "The Forgotten World", "Star of Life" and "Come Home from Earth."

Second place is a tie between Henry Kuttner and Murray Leinster.

Kuttner's "Sword of Tomorrow" and "The Power and the Glory" are really super. On the other hand I didn't care much for "I am Eden" or "The Way of the Gods" and some others, but I do like the Hognens of Kentucky. Keep this series coming.

Leinster's Kim Rendell Series and his "Pocket Universes" are great stories but the one I liked best was a short published in TWS two or three years ago entitled *De Profundis*.

To come down to the third place I think I'll give that to George O. Smith. His "Quest to Centaurus" was Okay. "In the Cards" was better and "Quarantine" was great. But "A Dog's Life" in the last issue was certainly a dud.

I have one peeve against you, Ed. I hate Tubby! He might get by in a comic book but he is much too infantile for TWS.

About the art work, no comment, except that the covers seem to be improving. The one illustrating "The Timeless Tomorrow" was really good.

One thing more—I told you I had been unable to get SS until the beginning of last year. This means I missed the issue containing Kuttner's "The Dark World", about which I have read so many favorable comments. Does anyone have a copy they would like to trade? I have some of Merritt's stories, and I would be glad to trade one of them for it. I have "Seven Footprints to Satan", "The Face in the Abyss", "Dwellers in the Mirage", and "Ship of Ishtar". Anybody want to trade?—38 East 200 South, St. George, Utah.

From here it looks as if you might have a deal from the Merrittfans, Miss Workman. And do write us again. That was a darned intelligent letter. Confidentially we have the same feeling about *DE PROFUNDIS*—consider it the best try yet at the topmost pinnacle stf can reach—presentation of a truly "alien" viewpoint.

## HO'S A WHEEL?

by R. F. Dikeman

Dear Wheel: You are quite a fickle person, aren't you? You keep the cover nice and tame for awhile and then you go and stick a doozer on your APRIL issue. Egads, skeletons are bad enough but with ice cubes on their shoulders yet! I blush when I buy it. But if you will hold on a moment, and you readers too, I have some bouquets to fling presently.

First, congrats on padding your rag with more ghoulish gobs of literature—about time. We chew our nails for a month waiting for T.W.S. and we are entitled to more stories when it finally comes. You readers agree?

Report card:

1. "FACELESS MEN" by Ill' Leo (Zagat) Sickeningly wonderful—just kidding about sickeningly tho. Really swell. Give it an E for excellent.

2. "WORLD OF WULKINS" best story by far. Love that Belke Long. Give it an E too.

3. "THIEVES OF TIME" s'good, give it an S for Scintillating

4. "FILE OF TROUBLE" next with N for Nice, good ole' Henryletta Kuttner.

5. In the stench class was "Rogues The Scavengers," recommend—closepin (spelling intentional).

6. All the rest of the mess was up to par, s' fact. 2 cents worth of reader—(Reader Speaks)—Need more witty letters like the one you are holding now, and about to put in the royal and bulging wastebasket (you better not)! All in all your ish was better than the preceding ones—that's all anybody can ask for, isn't it?—Improvement every ish.—R. D. #5, Glenside, Ithaca, New York.

Glad you think we're improving, Frere Dikeman.

## AH, SWEET TOOTH!

by Virginia L. Shawl

Dear Editor: There is a certain bone that I wish to pick tooth to tooth with you on. This bone, sir, bears the tag, love interest in science-fiction. With an anguished wail, we arise, we step to the front and demand to know why a certain swell story like "Faceless Men" must be cluttered up with a lot of extraneous love angles.

When one parts with one's hard earned coin of the realm, all twenty cents worth, (with my mathematical genius, I estimate that, at the present price of milk per hundred wt., twenty cents worth would amount to precisely two squirts per corner per cow. Don't blush Mr. Sigler). Now where was I, oh yes, one does not care to labor thru descriptions of the scientist hero's palpitating pulse reactions to the glamorous, witty, honey-blond heroine. And why a honey-blond anyway?

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Observe, we say, the works of such great artists in that line as Merritt, Kuttner and Brackett. No doubt, some vile dog will rise and say that Leigh is not a fantasy writer. Whereupon we will shout back that she is one and has produced some fine examples of the genus fantasia.

With a glare in the direction of the foul serpent who dared to interrupt us, we sum up our stand on this momentous question thusly—sciencefiction is one thing, and boy meets girl is something else. Never the twain shall meet nor should they ever meet.

Whew! Drawing in a long breath, we proceed to stick our libby white neck out and shout lustily, "Hurrah for the Hogbensi!" Ducking hastily as the ray guns flash, we repeat in a muted voice, "Hurrah for the Hogbensi!" It would take a Kuttner to dream up anything so wonderfully zany as that bunch of hill-billy mutants. Me, I love 'em. Give us more, much more of those delightful characters, please.

From a hearty peal of laughter at the antics of the "Hogbensi" to a quiet chuckle of amusement at that 'mad about him, glad about him, but I get so sad about him' sentence. What a perfectly luscious description that would make for the Bradburysites. Don't shoot! Lay that pistol down! I hastily confess that I also belong to that gang. Can I crawl out of that hole now?

Mournfully we come to the conclusion that even the best of friends must part. Musing over that pearl of wisdom we close with a word or two or two hundred.

To you, Mr. Levya. Never before have I encountered such a sparkling example of how to toss the English language around as your rib-tickling epistle. Allow me, my dear sir, to present you with this little token of my deep appreciation and admiration. This exquisite, hand-painted, gold-edged frying pan. You can use it to fry those famed ova, and I quote you, sir, savory hindquarters of the porcus.

But down here on the farm we just call it ham and eggs and let it go at that. Ignorant durn fools, ain' we.—Big Springs Farm, Freeport, Illinois.

We rise on our somewhat wobbly (at this point) tentacles to shout that romance is proper (or improper, depending on the point of view) in any story in which it rears its lovely head. However, you may have a point or three when, as too often happens, it appears heels first at the end of a tractor beam thrown blindly into space by an author desperate for something to put flesh on the protruding bones of his plot.

How about sending us one of those cork-bottomed skillets? We have one of rubber to exchange for it. It gives a gentle aromatic tang to the ova et porcus. Something like the always-welcome effect of crumbling art-gum eraser in your victim's pipe tobacco.

## ANTIPENULT

by David Wesser

Davidus tibi, editorio salutem dicte (I get so tired of these perpetual 'Dear Ed' salutations): This is to inform you that for upwards of two years I have watched with bated breath and racing pulse the hair-raising manipulations of countless Bems, Burns and Beauties, Inc. in your magazine. I have seen Dear Ol' Sol and Terran civilization abused, profaned and almost, but never quite, completely destroyed, several hundred times.

I have watched, with a decided pricking of the small hairs at the base of my spine, as Gregory Peck or Van Johnson extricated luscious blondes, brunettes, redheads and assorted what-have-you's from the foul clutches of the three-headed, pretzel-shaped, radioactive mutants of Greppsgeundheit III. I have been chilled, thrilled and disgusted (the last chiefly by your poetical aspirations; UGH! no wonder why they formed ya' to leave P.U.).

In this time I have developed a taste for Leinster,



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Heinlein, Zagat, Hammond, Fitzgerald, Binder (he deserves excommunication for his writings in a comic-book, no less), Cartier, Finlay, Astarita and George Smith.

And yet in all this time I did not dare to write in. Ya' wanna know why? Because of you, you great big fat bum, you. I have repeatedly watched the editorial wrath descend upon those who dared confess to the stigma of being a new fan; but now the worm has turned and picked up a rock. Every dog has its day, sir fans included.

As for the April T.W.S. it was readable, if not spectacular. The shorts were mediocre at best and the novel nothing to do hand-springs about. The novel was entertaining but the faceless creeps could hardly compare with Leinster's "Little Fellahs". I was disappointed that the hee-ro only saved 18,000,000 souls instead of the usual 2,000,000,000.

Before closing I'd like to entreat you to obtain some of L. Ron Hubbard's stuff. I read one of his stories and guess what—the hero and his loved one both got bumped off:—12 Grant Avenue, Newark 8, New Jersey.

Mirabile dictu! Pax vobiscum! Arma virumque cano! O tempora, o mores. Caveat emptor, cave canum.

## THROWING STORIES

by C. O. Simms

Dear Ed: Just a few lines on the April ish. of T.W.S. Quite a lineup this month, you've been really throwing the stories at us the last few issues.

The lead story, The Faceless Men, started off swell but, as time went on, it began to seem a little familiar. This brings up a point very well presented by Mr. Rick Sneary, about authors repeating themselves, in The Reader Speaks.

Of course, the stories are not alike, in mood that is, but Mr. Zagat wrote a story back in 1936 called The Lanson Screen which is close to being identical with T.P.M. in plot. However, the current one by Arthur L. far surpasses the one written by him twelve years ago.

The pics by Finlay were good, but can't he get out of the habit of using Victor Mature and Carole Landis (on second thought, you can leave Miss Landis in) for his models? This is about the third time that people looking like stills of them have appeared in a painting of his.

The World of Wulkins came pretty close to being the number-one story. Verra Verra, horrifying and the ending was one of those surprise ones. Brings to mind another story on the same theme of the robot being the master, in a recent anthology, called "The Return of the Master" or something like that. It was

[Turn page]

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one of the best S.F. yarns I've read in a long time. "File of Trouble" by Henry Kuttner was right up there. I always get a laugh out of the Hogbens. Keep them coming.

As for the rest of the issue, put them in the filler file.

I'm glad you decided to increase the length of the mag and the five cents increase in price is worth it. Also, this gives us a much longer Reader Speaks column too.

Not much more to say now, but I'll be back again. —1709 W. Imperial Highway, Los Angeles 44, California.

Precisely what we've been fearing all along, Mr. Simms. About Finlay and his stills—well, what can we say except that we prefer the kind of stills the Hogbens use ourselves?

All in all a highly disrespectful group of epistles—but what is more fun than a day (or two) of infighting with no holds barred? Seriously, while the amount of verse had on dem ropes, we approve the increase in femme fanalogy. The ladies had an excellent turn-out this time—best we can remember.

The letters as a whole, once the abuse was filtered out, were lively and reasonably intelligent, if seldom witty. But then, who is? We'll be over at THE ETHER VIBRATES for STARTLING STORIES in September and back at the old stand for the October TWS. We hope to see you all in both places.

—THE EDITOR.

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## SCIENCE FICTION BOOK REVIEW

THE BLACK FLAME, by Stanley G. Weinbaum, Fantasy Press \$3.00.

**L**LOYD ARTHUR ESCHBACH and his enterprising publishing house of Reading, Pennsylvania, have scored another step forward in establishing themselves in the forefront of the current pioneer movement in science fiction book production with this volume, consisting of two stories which con-



stitute a series by one of the earliest and ablest of modern writers of fantastic probability, Stanley G. Weinbaum.

Mr. Weinbaum, as most students of science fiction know, died in 1935 when just attaining full stride as a writer and these two stories, along with his justly famed shorter effort, A MARTIAN ODYSSEY, are perhaps the finest of the many tales he spun.

The first of them, DAWN OF FLAME, is of novelet length and first appeared in this magazine in the issue of June, 1939. Its sequel, THE BLACK FLAME, is the novel which led the opening issue of our companion magazine, STARTLING STORIES, in January of the same year. That they won magazine publication in reverse order is the result of the vicissitudes of posthumous publication.

They are stories of a strange primitive-sophisticated civilization that the author presumed to have arisen in North America after the dark ages that followed the near wipe-out of mankind via atomic and bacteriological warfare late in the twentieth century.

In DAWN OF FLAME this civilization is still in a formative state—with a small group

[Turn page]

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of individuals, headed by a pair of immortals, Joaquin Smith and his sister, Margaret of Urbs, recovering secrets of lost science and discovering such new ones as the gift of eternal life, building an empire which is rapidly expanding over the continent.

Essentially it is a conflict between Hull Tarvish, a hillbilly from the Ozark region who stubbornly refuses to submit to the all-powerful encroachments of empire, and Margaret of Urbs, who symbolizes the insight, whimsicalities, cruelty and magnificence of woman everlasting. Of the two it is inevitably Margaret, who emerges the larger figure. Hull, with his naivete and stubbornness, is somewhat of a clay figure.

THE **BLACK FLAME** presents the post-atomic civilization in a far more advanced condition—suffering from the one-man invasion of one Thomas Marshall Connor, electrocuted for murder during the nineteen-thirties and, thanks to autopsical omission, alive via electrolosis for a thousand years. He emerges literally from the grave to conflict with the eternal Margaret.

But just as civilization is far more complex than in the day of Hull Tarvish—Earth itself has been conquered by atomic transport and the planets are again within reach—so Connor is a vastly more complex and sophisticated man than the Ozark hillbilly.

He engages in an abortive revolution against the rule of the eternals, becomes an object of fascination and, ultimately, adoration to Margaret herself and finally wins her in a subtly contrived climax.

Of the two stories, **THE BLACK FLAME** seemed to us to be by far the more interesting in concept and development—though its predecessor is never dull despite certain Tarzanish crudities. Weinbaum wrote easily and vividly and his characterization is such that the reader never fails to feel the pressing and urgent reality of what is actually arrant make-believe. This is creative magic of a high order and magic which, because of its author's untimely death, the field of science fiction must sorely miss.

THE WORLD OF A, by A. E. van Vogt, Simon and Schuster, \$2.50

WITH the possible exception of the author's **SIAN**, also published by S&S, **THE WORLD OF A** (pronounced **THE WORLD OF NULL-A**) is the best known work by one of the acknowledged masters of

stf. It is, in fact, one of the outstanding novels of stf history, up to and including the late H. G. Wells.

Ä, for the uninitiated, is not a mysterious symbol from some code of supra-high mathematics dealing with relativity. It is merely a representation of non-Aristotelianism, beloved of our semantic experts, or the reversal of the so-called philosophic verities upon which western civilization has operated in practise for two thousand years plus.

The world of Ä is a world of the distant future—with Earth and the Solar System reduced to mere dots in an inter-galactic civilization ruled by a seldom-mentioned but distantly all-powerful council and swayed by impulses of almost unrealizable scope.

Null-A is a new development in this vast network, a tiny but vital experiment whose success threatens all so-called systematic government. While its finest fruition is upon a colonized Venus its core lies on Earth—in a mighty machine which conditions all men semantically—which is really the art of understanding and being completely understood by their fellows.

Null-A represents the perfect anarchy—an anarchy in which each man, because he instinctively reacts correctly to social needs and problems, has no more need of government than he has of the policeman on the corner. It is, in short, a logical approach toward Utopia whose existence is intolerable to the varied forces that govern many portions of the inhabited galaxy.

They combine forces to destroy the machine—forces subtly integrated and balanced and ever deadly—only to be stopped at the crucial moment by the emergence of Gilbert Gosseyn, an unknown human factor whose re-emergence after several deaths, makes him dangerous out of all proportion.

Suspense mounts rapidly as the issues are drawn and new concepts and ideas emerge in every chapter. And, little by little, through his several lives, Gosseyn must learn who he really is and what is his purpose in repeated reincarnations. Furthermore, he must learn before the entire null-A experiment is erased.

Mr. van Vogt, while still afflicted at times with the multiplicity of tangential ideas that assail his story line, has produced a book which well merits its place high in the stf classics.

—THE EDITOR.

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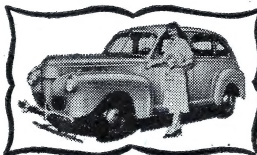
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